

"Tell me again," Mr. Granger asked, becoming exasperated with his eight-year-old daughter. "Just WHAT are we doing taking this route home?"

"I've explained, Dad. I don't know. I just know we have to be here."

The Grangers had become used to slightly strange things happening around their daughter, but this was out of character, even for her. Normally she was so logical, never doing anything without a reason, and usually taking ages weighing the pro's and con's before she decided what she wanted to do.

Half an hour after leaving the ferry which had returned them from their brief holiday in northern Spain, she had suddenly become frantic, and instead of merely following their route on the road atlas, had demanded that they leave the normal route and take a road leading through one of the more rural parts of Surrey.

Her mother, sitting in the back seat, as Hermione loved to navigate and it was easier sitting in the front, sighed and said, "Your father's becoming tired, dear. Don't forget, he still has a long way to drive. Let's get back onto the main road."

Hermione had grabbed her father's arm suddenly, "Please, Dad. Just a little while longer?"

Seeing unaccustomed tears in his daughter's eyes, he nodded and replied, "Just a little while, okay?"

Brightening, Hermione smiled and said, "Okay, Dad."

"So where are we now?"

"In another mile we should be approaching Little Whinging," Hermione replied with authority.

Sure enough, a minute later they passed a sign saying "Little Whinging." As they passed a park, Hermione screamed out, "Dad, look!"

Without a word, her father stopped the car, and got out, running towards a gang of boys who were beating up a smaller boy.

"Get the bloody hell out of here," he shouted at the gang.

Hermione, who had followed him, but was a little way behind as she couldn't run as fast as her father, had caught up far enough to hear her father. She knew how angry he was as he never swore like that.

The boy was groping around on the ground for his spectacles and finally found them and put them on. "Thank you," he said.

His spectacles were broken and his face was bleeding, but he wasn't crying. He tried to stand, but couldn't get up properly.

"I think we need to get you to a hospital to be checked over," Hermione's father said. "You can call your parents from there."

"My parents are dead," the boy said quietly.

"Who do you live with then?" asked Hermione.

"That's none of our business..." began her father.

"My uncle and aunt," the boy replied.

Hermione heard a gasp from her father when he picked the boy up, but didn't ask why. Somehow she knew he wouldn't tell her and she didn't want to further embarrass the boy.

When they reached the car, her father put the boy in a back seat and leaned across to his wife. Hermione heard him whisper, "He's so light. There's something wrong here."

The boy obviously heard as well, and began to struggle. "I'm okay. Just take me home. I want my cupboard."

"Your cupboard?" asked Hermione. "What's that?"

"Where I live, of course," the boy replied. "Under the stairs."

"Show us where you live," said Mr. Granger, with a strange tone in his voice.

The boy directed them, and Mr. Granger went to ring the doorbell. The boy insisted on walking after him and Hermione followed him.

A large man opened the door. "What do you want? What you doing with HIM?" The word HIM was almost spat out.

"I found him being beaten up by a gang of lads," said Mr. Granger. "He's obviously hurt and needs to be seen by a doctor."

"Rubbish. Just childhood games," the man replied, trying to reach for the boy. "A lie down is all he needs."

"And why is he so underweight?" Mr. Granger asked, stepping between the boy and the man he had already decided he didn't like. "And what's this he says about living in a cupboard?"

The man waved his arm airily. "He's just a liar. Always been trouble."

But Hermione had already darted past her father and the man.

Both the man and her father shouted at her to come back, but Hermione had already opened the door to the cupboard under the stairs. A stink of stale urine wafted at them, making Hermione wretch. Turning to the front door again, she demanded, "Then why is there a bed in here?"

Her father pushed past the man to see for himself.

"Hermione. Go back to the car. I will deal with this."

Seeing a phone in the hallway near the front door, he picked it up.

"What do you think you're doing?" the large man yelled, but Mr. Granger angrily pushed him away. The other man might have been fat, but Mr. Granger was taller and much more muscular.

"Calling the police," he replied, then he spoke into the phone. "Police, please. And possibly an ambulance. I've found an injured and probably abused child." He turned to the other man. "Where are we?"

The man didn't answer, but the boy gave the address, which Mr. Granger quickly repeated.

Nobody said anything after Mr. Granger put the phone down. A larger boy appeared from the kitchen. "What's going on?"

Hermione screamed, "That's one of the boys who was beating him up."

"Hermione, I told you to go back to the car," Mr. Granger said, but the last part of his words was drowned out by a siren as a police car pulled up outside.

"Now, gentlemen," said the police constable. "Can one of you explain what is going on?"

"This man tried to break into my home," blustered the large man. "And this girl came running in, trespassing on private property."

"Is this true, sir?"

"Yes, but..."

"They've been keeping him in a cupboard," yelled Hermione.

"Who? This man?"

"No. The boy. I'll show you."

"Don't be silly, child," but Hermione had once again got past her father. This time however she was grabbed by the larger man.

"Take your hand off of my daughter," her father threatened.

"If you don't mind, sir. I will just take a look," the policeman said. Not waiting for a reply as he pushed past the two other men.

It took a few seconds for him to see the bed and less than that to smell the cupboard.

"Who has been living in here?" he asked.

The boy, who had been holding onto Mr. Granger's legs, said, "Me, sir."

"And he's terribly underweight," added Mr. Granger.

The policeman realised that he was scaring the boy and made an effort to appear friendly. "Son, what's your name?"

"Harry, sir. Harry Potter."

"Well, Mr. Potter, would you mind lifting up your shirt for me?"

Harry looked unsure, but did as he was told.

Mr. Granger wished his daughter wasn't seeing this as he heard her gasp. Harry's ribs were clearly visible and there were dark marks all over his chest and abdomen.

However Hermione recovered more quickly than her father and pointed to the large boy, who had remained silent after the policeman had arrived. "And he was beating him up."

"Just kids playing," scoffed Harry's uncle.

The policeman pulled himself up to his full height. "I have reason to believe that this child has been abused. He obviously needs to go to the hospital, then I would like you to come down to the station to answer some questions, if you please."

It was obviously not a request. "Am I under arrest?"

"No, sir. Nothing like that." Hermione heard the policeman say in a low voice to her father, "Not yet."

Harry was clinging to Mr. Granger. "Can I take him to the hospital, officer?"

"I'm sorry, sir, No. We have to take him. But you can follow us if you wish."

"Can I go with him, Dad?"

"You go with your father, Miss. You'll see him soon enough," the officer replied. He made a radio call explaining the situation and he asked for the duty social worker to meet them at Casualty. (N)

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The examination took a long time. The Police had left, after taking a formal statement from Mr. Granger. Harry's uncle had gone with them, his bluster gone.

A harassed looking woman had come in and introduced herself. "I'm the duty child care social worker," she explained. "The doctors want to keep him in, at least until tomorrow, to run a lot more tests on him."

"What will happen to him?" asked Hermione.

"Once he's released, he'll go to an emergency children's home for a few nights, until we find him some temporary foster care."

"Can't we keep him, Dad?" Hermione pleaded.

"He's not a stray puppy. Hermione."

"But, Dad."

"There are rules and procedures and things. We can't." He turned to the social worker. "We really have to be going. Can you give me your number, please? I'd really like to know how things go with him."

She nodded and pulled out a card and handed it to him.

"By the way," she said, "if you really are interested, there's a desperate need for foster parents. I'm not saying you'd be able to help Harry here, but there are a lot of other needy children out there."

"What will happen to Harry in foster care?"

Her face fell. "He'll probably be passed from one foster family to another until he's eighteen, possibly with some weeks in a children's home between families."

"Can't he be adopted?"

She grimaced. "He could be, but the chances of an older boy finding an adoptive family is pretty slim. But at least he'll be properly fed, assuming the courts don't release him back to his relatives."

"Could that happen?"

"It could do. In this case I don't think it's likely. He's got too many injuries over too long a period."

"Well, please let me know how he gets on."

"I'll tell you what I can;" she agreed. "Oh, and Mr. Granger. Thank you. Most people would have driven on and done nothing."

"Not my dad," said Hermione, proudly.

For the first time, the social worker smiled. "You can be proud of your father. There's not many like him."

"I am. But couldn't we adopt Harry?"

"I'm sorry, dear. To get approval as adoptive parents takes months or years. Harry needs help now."

"Can I at least say goodbye to Harry?" asked Hermione.

The social worker looked at Mr. Granger. "I don't see why not," she replied.

She led Hermione into the cubicle where Harry still was, until they could find a bed on a ward.

"I've got to go now, Harry," Hermione explained. "But they should find you a new family now."

"Nobody will want a freak like me," Harry said sadly.

"You're not a freak. You're a nice boy with a horrible uncle, that's all," insisted Hermione.

But Harry turned away.

"Don't look away from me," snapped Hermione. "We care about you and don't you forget it."

She grasped his hand and everyone in the room had a loud CRACK and Harry fell back onto his pillow and Hermione collapsed to the floor, both unconscious.

"Get a doctor in here," called out the social worker. She turned to Mr. Granger and asked, "What just happened?" but he had bent down to his daughter, who felt like she was burning up.

"I don't know," he replied.

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Author's note...

I hope the start of this isn't too clichéd. Please review and let me know if you think it is worth continuing.

(N) Casualty is the informal British term for the Accident and Emergency Department, or A&E, what Americans call the Emergency Room.



"Albus, are you there?" called a head from the green-glowing fire in the office of Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, the revered headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. "Albus?"

Immediately concerned, an elderly gentleman with a long white beard got up from his desk and walked to the fireplace and asked urgently, "Arabella? Has something happened?"

"Yes," the woman's face answered. "I don't really know what exactly, but Harry was taken away in a police car."

"Why? Do you know where?"

"I don't know any more than that, but another, ordinary car was following them."

"Thank you, Arabella. Stay there in case he comes back. I'll handle it from here."

But as he settled himself back into his chair behind his desk, for perhaps the first time in many years, Albus Dumbledore had no idea what to do.

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He wasn't the only one. In the hospital, the doctors were at a loss to know why the two children had suddenly collapsed into unconsciousness.

They'd rushed another trolley to Hermione and lifted her onto it, but as they moved her away, both children had begun to gag and have difficulty breathing. After attempting that three times, they had moved Hermione's trolley back next to Harry and the two children slowly began to recover their colour.

The head of the team of doctors who had ended up caring for Harry and Hermione turned to Mr. And Mrs. Granger and finally decided what to say.

"Both of them seem stable for now. I'm not going to try to fool you. You've probably gathered that we have no idea what caused them to collapse like that. There appears to be nothing wrong with your daughter and none of the boy's injuries could cause anything like this. All we can do is keep them both in for observation overnight and then we take it from there."

"But why do they seem to have trouble breathing every time you separated them?"

"Mr. Granger. I don't know. I've never seen anything like it and nor have any of the other staff here."

A thin angry-looking woman came bursting in at that moment. "What's going on? Where's my husband? What lies has that boy been telling you?"

The doctor turned to the woman and asked, "And who are you, may I ask?"

"Petunia Dursley. His aunt. He lives with us."

"Well, Mrs. Dursley. He hasn't been telling us anything. But my report will say he has been abused and neglected for a long time. If you want your husband, I suggest you go and see him at the police station."

With a look of hatred, Petunia Dursley turned, sniffed, and stormed out of the ward.

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Just as confused as the doctors was Mafalda Hopkirk and her staff in the Improper Use of Magic Office in the Ministry of Magic. A tremendous burst of magic had occurred in a muggle hospital in Surrey, south of London. Unable to ascertain what had cause it, she had immediately alerted the duty auror in the Magical Law Enforcement office.

"I'll go, just to see what's going on," said one of the auror team that had immediately been summoned to the office.

"Be careful," said his colleague.

Using a disillusionment charm to stay invisible, the auror apparated to the hospital and quickly detected the source of the magical outburst. It appeared to have come from two young children and had happened in the presence of a full medical team.

When most of the team had finally moved away, he crept closer to examine the two children. There didn't appear to be anything unusual about them until something made him take a second glance at the boy's face. There was some mark under his hair. Hoping nobody would see the hair move, he brushed the hair away from the boy's forehead and saw the scar he would have recognised anywhere.

Not even realising that he had actually knocked one of the nurses over in his haste to get out, he ran outside and apparated back to the Ministry.

"It's Harry Potter," he gasped.

Harry Potter was famous. There had been an evil wizard bent on taking over the country and probably the world. Nobody who opposed him survived, but one night he had gone to a house in the village of Godric's Hollow to kill a family. He had killed the father and the mother, but when he had cast the killing curse on the baby boy, it had rebounded on him and he had never been seen since. The boy, who was left with a strangely shaped scar on his forehead, was called Harry Potter.

He had also disappeared that night, secreted away from the wizarding world by the most powerful good wizard of the time, Albus Dumbledore. Not even the Ministry knew where Dumbledore had hidden Harry Potter and no persuasion had been able to make him tell.

"We ought to alert Fudge," said one of the aurors. Fudge was the current Minister of Magic.

"No. Get a message to Dumbledore," said another.

"The Minister won't like it."

"Who would you rather face when he's angry, Fudge or Dumbledore?"

"I'll get Dumbledore. He can decide what to tell the Minister."

After a quick call through the fire, called a floo-call, Dumbledore himself had jumped into his fireplace and reappeared from the fireplace in the aurors' office.

"You've found Harry?" he asked urgently.

"Yes," said the auror who'd seen him. "We were investigating an outburst of magic in a muggle hospital in Surrey. But the magic wasn't just from Harry. It was from a girl as well. And from what I heard the doctors saying, they can't separate them."

"What do you mean?"

"Just that. Every time they are taken away from each other, they have trouble breathing."

The look of shock on Dumbledore's face amazed the aurors present. Nothing shook the great Albus Dumbledore, victor so many years ago over the previous dark lord and the leading figure in the wizengamot, the nearest thing the wizarding world in Britain has to a parliament. As well as that he was a powerful figure in the international wizarding world. But shocked he was. He simply gasped and said, "it can't be."

The other aurors stood waiting for instructions.

"Tell nobody. I will investigate this myself. Then we'll need a team to obliviate the muggles."

"Yes, sir," said the senior auror, glad that someone else was now taking the decisions on this case.

As Dumbledore walked out, one of the junior aurors said to the senior auror, "Don't you think we ought to tell the Minister?"

"Dumbledore said tell nobody. If you want to go against Dumbledore, that's up to you."

The junior auror shut up.

Dumbledore walked to one of the apparation stations in the ministry, as it was not possible to apparate to or from just anywhere within the ministry for security reasons. A fraction of a second later, he was outside the hospital and quickly transfiguring his cloak into something more like the clothes he saw the muggles wearing.

Walking in to the hospital, he began to head to where he could feel the magic coming from.

"Sir!" a woman called. "You'll have to check in here."

"Oh. I'm sorry," he said to the bored-looking receptionist. "I am looking for a boy who was brought in a while ago in a police car."

"Huh? Oh, a police car? Oh, yes. Can I ask your name please?"

"Albus Dumbledore."

"And are you family?"

"Not exactly."

"Family visiting only, I'm afraid."

"I represent his parents, who are dead."

"Oh. I'm sorry. Well, the social worker is in that office over there."

"Social worker?" he asked, confused.

The woman looked at him strangely. "The one who is responsible for him now. You'll have to see her."

"Over there, you say?"

He walked to the office the woman had pointed out and knocked, but there was no reply. Seeing that the receptionist wasn't watching, he turned and walked to the source of the magic.

He saw the two children lying on the two casualty trolleys, almost side by side and couldn't help a slight smile. He noticed a worried-looking couple sitting beside the girl, but ignored them for a moment as he approached the still unconscious boy and said simply, "Hello, Harry."

The woman looked up at him. "You know Harry?"

Dumbledore smiled. "Well, I was a good friend of his parents, but it's been a long time since I've seen Harry."

"Obviously not that good a friend," commented Mr. Granger.

"I'm sorry?"

"Didn't a 'good friend' of his parents' ever think to check on how he was?"

Dumbledore was puzzled. "After his parents were... er, died, I took him to live with his only relatives, so I don't understand what you mean."

"Some relatives..." the other man retorted, but whatever else he was going to say was lost as his daughter began to stir.

"Mum? Dad?" the girl mumbled.

Her two parents got up and while her father took her hand, her mother stroked her daughter's forehead. "We're here, darling."

"What happened?"

"You just fainted," her father replied.

"I don't faint," the girl denied, her voice a little more forceful.

"What's the last thing you can remember?" Dumbledore asked.

The girl looked at him. "Who are you?"

"I'm a friend of Harry's," he explained.

"Harry doesn't have any friends," the girl snapped angry, now sitting up. "Friends don't let him half starve to death, get beaten up every day, or shut in a cupboard for hours on end."

Dumbledore recoiled, partly from the girl's obvious anger and partly from the shock at what she'd said.

"Is this true?" he asked the girl's parents.

Mr. Granger nodded. "He's covered in bruises and the doctor said he's grossly underweight. Hermione, that's my little girl's name..."

"I'm NOT a little girl," Hermione insisted.

"Hermione found where Harry had been living, in a dirty cupboard under the stairs. So I'd say your choice of guardians left a little to be desired."

Dumbledore walked to be beside the boy and pulled down the sheet covering him. The sight made him take a sharp breath. Without a second thought he pulled out his wand and muttered something. The others watched, astounded, as the boy's bruises faded into nothing.

"Harry, it's time to wake up now," Dumbledore spoke in a gentle voice, waving his wand lightly over the boy.

Harry stirred, then squinted his eyes at the bright hospital lights, "Hermione?" he mumbled, still only half awake. "Don't go."

"I'm right here," said Hermione.

Startled at her voice, Harry opened his eyes wide and turned to look at her. "You're real? But I was dreaming about you."

"Really?" asked Dumbledore. "And what were you dreaming?"

"I... I can't remember. Who are you, sir?"

"Just a friend," Dumbledore replied, while Mr. Granger snorted at his description of himself.

"I told you. Harry doesn't have any friends," Hermione argued.

Harry looked ashamed. Hermione immediately sensed that she'd said something wrong. "Harry. It's not your fault."

"I'm a freak," Harry said sadly. "That's why nobody likes me."

"You're not a freak!" cried Hermione, beginning to cry with frustration. "And I like you."

"Who told you that you were a freak, Harry?" asked Mrs. Granger.

"My uncle and aunt. That's what they always call me."

Dumbledore sighed. "When I sent you live with them, I thought Petunia at least would love you for Lily's sake."

Without warning Hermione flew at the elderly professor as if she wanted to scratch his eyes out. Startled, he gave a quick flick of his wand and Hermione was lying back on the bed.

"Don't touch her," Harry screamed.

"He didn't," Hermione assured him, then she turned back to Dumbledore and asked, "How did you do that?"

"Magic," smiled Dumbledore.

"There's no such thing as magic," said Harry.



"Who's Lily?" asked Hermione.

Dumbledore smiled again. "You don't miss a thing, do you, Hermione? I think you're going to be a very bright witch one day."

"She's not a witch. She's nice," cried Harry.

"You don't even know what a witch is?" asked Dumbledore. "It's worse than I thought. I'll explain it to you later, but first I have to take you back to the Dursleys."

"No!" cried Hermione.

"Over my dead body," said Mr. Granger. "Anyway, I think you'll find nobody at home right now. They're at the police station, being interviewed for abusing Harry."

"This complicates matters."

"How can you say you're a friend of Harry's and want to send him back to those... those... people?" asked Hermione, looking at her father wondering if she dare use another word and deciding that she daren't.

"There are other factors you don't understand," said Dumbledore.

"I don't care."

"Well, if Harry can't go back to the Dursleys tonight, he'll have to go home with you, just for tonight."

"He can't," pointed out Mrs. Granger. "The doctors want them both to stay in overnight, then Harry has to go to a home with Social Services."

"No. We can't have that. Too many people to remember," said Dumbledore.

"And anyway, we can't separate them. They had trouble breathing when the doctors tried," Mr. Granger added.

"Really? Very curious. Yes. Please excuse me. I want to go and check on something. I will be back shortly."

Without another word, Dumbledore walked out.

"Who was that man?" asked Hermione.

"I have no idea," her father answered.

"Well he's not taking Harry back to the Dursleys. I won't have it."

Mr. Granger smiled at his daughter's unaccustomed passionate statement.

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Deep in the department of mysteries was a room entitled magical contracts. It contained just five items. A table, a chair, a quill, a bottle of ink and a large, rather dusty book with the title "Record of Magical Bonds, 1546-" The end date was left blank.

It was to this book that Professor Dumbledore went. He quickly flicked through the pages, past the records of centuries of marital bonds, life debts, unbreakable vows until he came to page for that day's date.

Clearly written in the somewhat old-fashioned style the quill used, were the words "Harry James Potter and Hermione Jean Granger. Soul Bond."

Frowning, the professor closed the book. "Yes," he said to himself. "This certainly does complicate matters."

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Author's note...

Wow! Two chapters in two days. Please don't expect me to keep up that pace, especially as I'm still supposed to be moving very soon. And I can't believe I've got twenty three reviews for the first chapter of this story already. I hope you like the second chapter as much. Please review.

Before he left the Ministry, Professor Dumbledore made a quick floo call to the Ministry's Department of Muggle Relations, then he once again walked to the apparation station and instantly appeared outside the hospital.

Looking far more relaxed than he felt, he walked into the cubicle containing Harry, Hermione and her parents.

"You will shortly be given permission to take both Harry and Hermione home. I think it's best that they are out of here as quickly as possible."

"Do you?" replied Mr. Granger, amazed at the older man's arrogance.

Unperturbed by the tone, the professor simply asked mildly, "Don't you want to be able to help Harry?"

"Of course, but you can't just go around..." Whatever Mr. Granger was going to say was lost as a doctor walked in at that moment.

The doctor's face went slightly blank for a moment, then he said, "Mr. And Mrs. er... Granger isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Okay. Both children have been cleared to go home. Once Harry is dressed you can go."

Before either of the Grangers could reply the doctor had simply turned and walked away.

"You did something," said Hermione to Professor Dumbledore. "I saw you. You flicked your hand and you were muttering something."

"Did I really?"

Hermione looked suspiciously at the smile on the old man's face. "I don't trust you."

For the first time, Professor Dumbledore actually felt happier about the situation. "Yes," he said to himself. "You might do very well."

At that moment the social worker returned. "Why didn't you tell me you were both already on the approved list of foster parents?" she asked Mr. Granger.

Mr. Granger couldn't keep the look of surprise off of his face for a moment, then he glanced at Professor Dumbledore, who simply winked at him.

"Er. I didn't realise the approval had come through," he replied, realising that the woman was expecting a reply.

"Oh. You didn't get the letter we always send out? Oh, well. Never mind. It makes things easier. I'm sure your daughter will be glad to know that this means that you can take Harry, for now at least. But it doesn't mean that you can necessarily keep him."

"You're coming with us," Hermione almost screamed.

"Perhaps we should allow Harry to get dressed in peace," suggested Professor Dumbledore, so they all left the cubicle. Hermione didn't want to go far, so she waited just outside the curtains while Harry got dressed.

With the bruising almost gone thanks to Dumbledore's earlier healing spell, Harry was able to walk easily without any pain and when they reached the Grangers' car, the professor simply said, "And now I will leave you. I will see you tomorrow evening at your home. Goodbye."

He had simply walked away and turned a corner when Mrs. Granger remembered, "But he doesn't know where we live."

Hermione ran after him to tell him their address, and Harry ran with her, but when they turned the corner the professor had gone.

"He's gone," said Hermione. "But that's impossible. There's no way out this way."

"There must be," said her father, but when he came to check he was amazed to see that Hermione was correct. That part of the car park had a high fence on two sides and the bare wall of the hospital building on another side, leaving just the side facing their car, where he had walked into that area.

The strange man had simply disappeared into thin air. When they returned to the car, Hermione got in the back with Harry, instead of insisting on having the front passenger seat so that she could navigate more easily which she usually did.

"Harry," asked Mrs. Granger. "Are you feeling well enough for some shopping on the way home?"

"Yes, Mrs. Granger."

"Good. I hadn't noticed before, but those clothes are nothing but huge old rags. Would you mind if we buy you some new clothes?"

"Me? You don't have to do that." Harry looked ashamed.

"Harry," Hermione said sharply. "You have nothing to be ashamed of."

The rest of the drive home was a long one and Mr. Granger pulled into a service station on the motorway.

Harry and Hermione had fallen asleep on the back seat and Mrs. Granger shook them to wake them up.

Harry woke up startled and frightened, "I'm sorry Aunt Petunia. I'll make breakfast now." Then he realised he wasn't at home.

"Sorry we had to wake you," explained Mr. Granger. "But I need something to eat and to rest a while before we go on."

"I haven't any money," objected Harry. "Can I just stay in the car?"

"Don't worry," Mr. Granger replied. "This is our treat."

"Okay."

The food in the service station wasn't up to much, but when Harry had finished eating, he pushed his plate away a little and said, "Thank you. That was the best meal I've ever had."

The three Grangers looked at each other, startled and Mr. Granger's eyes narrowed with anger.

Seeing the worried look on Harry's face, Mrs. Granger quickly assured him that her husband was not angry with him.

When they finally reached a big hypermarket near the Granger's home, Mr. Granger opted to stay in the car while his wife and daughter took Harry inside to get him some clothes.

Harry couldn't believe the growing pile of clothes Mrs. Granger was picking out, with help from Hermione.

The moment they arrived home, Hermione wanted to show Harry the spare bedroom. "You can sleep in here for now," said Mrs. Granger, who had followed Hermione and Harry upstairs. "It isn't much, but..."

"It's brilliant. All this for me?" asked Harry, looking at the small bare room, empty except for a bed.

After a moment's hesitation as she tried to keep her composure, Mrs. Granger said, "I'll make up the bed for you..."

"I can do it," volunteered Harry.

"That's okay. You and Hermione can bring your things up. Oh, and Hermione. Show Harry where the bathroom is."

After Harry was changed into his new pyjamas, Mrs. Granger made them all a hot chocolate and they went to bed, the older Grangers relieved that the earlier need for Harry and Hermione to be so close together seemed to have gone.

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The next morning Harry got up early and went down to the kitchen. He was worried. How was he to prepare breakfast when he didn't know where anything was? He didn't even know what the Grangers liked for breakfast. He looked in the fridge but couldn't see any bacon, though there were some eggs. Perhaps eggs on toast would be enough?

The frying pan was hanging up a little too high for him to reach, so he had to jump and try to grab it off of it's hook.

He reached it on the third attempt, but instead of grabbing it, he'd only managed to knock it off and it went crashing to the floor, just missing his head on the way. Harry froze. He'd faced the wrath of the Dursleys when he'd accidentally done something to wake them up. He didn't think the Grangers would be as bad, but...

The door opened and Harry backed away, frightened.

"Harry? What are you doing down here?" asked Mrs. Granger.

"I'm sorry. I was just trying to cook breakfast and it fell."

"Trying to cook breakfast?" asked Mrs. Granger, amazed. Then she asked gently, "Do you cook breakfast at home?"

"I do all the cooking. It's my chore," explained Harry.

"Well you don't have to cook here," Mrs. Granger assured him, shocked that someone would leave something as potentially dangerous as cooking to an unsupervised seven year old, especially one as small and weak-looking as Harry. Realising that Harry had spoken again, she said, "Sorry, Harry. What was that?"

"I said, What shall I do?" asked Harry. "I'm good at cleaning or weeding." Then he added, "But Aunt Petunia says I don't pay enough attention though as I sometimes pull out a plant instead of a weed. I'm no good at repairing clothes though, I keep pricking myself with



the needle and Aunt Petunia gets cross because the blood stains the clothes."

Mrs. Granger didn't know how she kept herself together as a mixture of sadness for Harry and anger at the Dursleys threatened to overwhelm her. Remembering Harry's fearful look when her husband had been angry the day before, she forced herself to remain calm and merely said quietly, "Harry, you are our guest. You don't have to do anything."

"Okay," said Harry, his face suddenly looking so sad that she wondered what she'd said wrong to upset him.

She suspected that he wouldn't tell her if she asked, but she didn't have time anyway as rapid pounding down the stairs announced the arrival of her over energetic daughter, who had obviously woken up.

As she did most mornings, Hermione came in to hug her mother and then turned and gave an equally warm hug to Harry, who was obviously startled and a little embarrassed by Hermione's enthusiasm.

Mrs. Granger had to smile, wondering what everyone else who knew the quiet studious girl that was her daughter would have thought if they'd seen her at home, full of enthusiasm and energy.

After breakfast, Mrs. Granger began doing all the laundry they had brought back home with them from their holiday and, not wanting two children under her feet, gave Hermione the money to take the bus into town.

"Okay," Hermione quickly agreed, running up the stairs. "I have a book I need to take back to the library."

As Hermione came running back down with the book, Mrs. Granger said, "Don't make Harry spend all morning in the library. Show him around a bit, okay?"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Mu-um."

Seeing them half walk, half run down the garden path towards the bus stop, Mrs. Granger had to smile. Was it actually possible that Hermione might actually have found a friend? If he did stay with them, she hoped that Harry didn't get bored with Hermione like all the other children did. Sometimes she wished that Hermione wasn't quite so clever, she might be happier.

Hermione took Harry to the library first, persuading the librarian to make out a ticket for Harry to the junior section, explaining that he was her new foster brother.

After an unusually brief visit (for Hermione) to the library, Hermione had decided that it was her job to show Harry as much as possible of the new town.

When they arrived home, slightly late, for lunch, her mother asked her what they'd been doing.

"I got Harry a library card, then we went to the school office as it's open for a few hours a day in the holidays."

"Why did you go there?"

"To find out how you can enrol Harry in school, Mum," Hermione said in the tone of voice her mother was only too well aware meant that her daughter thought she was being slow on the uptake.

"Then we went to the sports centre, and I've got the form to add Harry to our family membership card. We went to the bus station to get a photo for his card before we came home. And we had some ice cream, then I showed Harry where we'd buy his school uniform and then..."

"Hermione. You were supposed to be entertaining Harry, not frog-marching the poor boy around town organising his life for him."

Hermione looked hurt at that, but her expression quickly changed as Harry said, "It was great, Mrs. Granger, honest."

Mrs. Granger smiled. "You're looking a little tired Harry. I think you two had better do something indoors after lunch."

A few hours later she peeked into the lounge to see Hermione happily watching television and Harry fast asleep in a chair.

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If Harry was having the happiest day he could remember, Professor Dumbledore wasn't. Unusually for him, he hadn't been able to sleep all night worrying. He had been so sure that leaving Harry with the Dursleys had been the right thing to do. It was the only way to ensure the continued protection of the blood sacrifice his mother had made.

Lily Evans, later Lily Potter had been such a warm hearted and generous spirited person that he had ignored Professor McGonagal's warning that the Dursleys were the worst sort of muggles, unable to believe that a sister of Lily Potter could possibly have been so vindictive.

He'd always meant to check on Harry, but somehow, there had always been something more urgent to do. To see James and Lily's young son, lying hurt in the hospital ward made him feel like he had failed them and Harry badly.

The physical injuries were nothing serious, and could be healed easily. The professor doubted that the same applied to the emotional injuries.

But if Harry left the Dursleys' home for good, how long would it be before he was found and killed, him and those who took him in? The professor promised himself that he would take action to protect Harry from the Dursleys, but the bitter fact remained, whether he liked it or not, Harry had to return to the Dursleys.

Then there was this new factor. The soul bond with the girl. A soul bond forming that early was rare though not completely unheard of and he still wasn't sure what the implications would be. In a soul bond between adults, the need to be together in the early stages was

paramount, but it had never been so strong that they couldn't live if they were separated. This was uncharted territory.

If circumstances weren't so serious he'd have had to smile at the girl's outspoken defensiveness towards Harry. Harry needed someone like that. If Harry had to return to the Dursleys, what would happen with the girl? What was her name again? Hermione something. Yes, Hermione Granger. He thought she'd be a force to reckon with in the future.

Her father seemed a strong forceful character, but if necessary, normally he could be obliviated, not that the professor liked obliviating muggles. Hermione was another matter. If she had a soul bond with Harry, obliviation wouldn't work anyway, and if it did, the risk of trying to oblivate a soul bond was too great.

So obliviation was out of the question, then. His task was how to return Harry to the Dursleys, ensure that he was safe and try to cope with the effects of that decision on their soul bond. Merlin himself would be worrying.

By morning the professor was tired. Not just from lack of sleep, but tired of always having to be the one to come up with the answers. He wasn't looking forward to the reaction from Harry and the older Grangers when he told them that Harry must go back, but Hermione's reaction was totally unpredictable. He would have to get to know this young girl.

The prophecy hadn't mentioned her, but now she was almost as involved as Harry. It was going to be a long evening.

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Author's note...

Sorry for the long delay. Not only did I have to spend all weekend preparing the new refuge before I FINALLY move house this coming weekend, but I spent half of last week in bed with a bad cold which gave me a headache just to look at the computer screen. It's still

lingering so if this chapter isn't too good, I'll blame that as I still feel rough. Probably overdid the working at the weekend.

If you have this story on alert, please consider adding it as a favourite story. That way anyone who views your page can find out about this story. I've found many great stories that way myself. The same applies to author alerts/favourite authors. Thank you.

To anyone who is saving the chapters, I frequently make corrections on the previous chapter each time I upload a new one, so you should re-download the previous chapters well as the new chapter. In this case I have made quite a few corrections to chapter one as well as a few corrections to chapter two.

Please review.

Brian

It was exactly seven o'clock when the doorbell rang and Hermione raced to answer it.

"Good evening, Hermione. May I come in?"

"Yes, sir," she replied to the elderly professor. Something about him this evening spoke of kindly authority and after seeing the effect he had had in the hospital the day before on the doctors, she slightly regretted the tone she had taken with him before.

"Good evening, everybody. I realised today that I had committed a major error. I neglected to introduce myself. I am Professor Dumbledore. I was headmaster to both of Harry's parents and in the future I will be his headmaster too."

Mr. Granger looked as if he didn't like that idea at all, but didn't say anything. But everybody noticed the glare he gave the professor and the atmosphere seemed quite chilled.

Mrs. Granger broke the ice a little with "Professor. Won't you have a cup of tea, then we can discuss what you came to discuss."

"That would be delightful. Thank you."

Mrs. Granger swept out of the room, but not before bending down to whisper to her husband, "Behave!"

Everybody was sure the professor heard it, but he just smiled quietly as he turned to Harry and asked, "And have you had a good day?"

"The best. We went to a library and my new school and the sports centre..."

Hermione couldn't help noticing that the beaming smile on Professor Dumbledore's face tightened slightly as Harry spoke about his new school.

It wasn't long before Mrs. Granger was back with tea for everyone and she joined her husband, sitting on the sofa.

Harry was sitting on the floor, having given up his chair to the professor.

"Harry. Wouldn't you be more comfortable in a chair?" the professor asked.

"It's okay."

"Nonsense. Stand up a moment."

What followed when Harry stood up was something they would all remember for the rest of their lives.

The professor pulled out a short stick, pointed at the space behind Harry, and a comfortable armchair matching the sofa and the other chairs in the room appeared from nowhere. "That's better," he said, as if he hadn't even noticed the shocked stares from the others.

"How did you do that?" asked Hermione, the first to recover. "And what's that thing you're holding."

"Just a little magic, Hermione. And this is a wand. I don't really need it, of course, for a simple spell like that, but it does look more impressive that way, doesn't it?"

"But... But my uncle says there's no such thing as magic," blurted Harry. He gingerly touched the chair and pushed down on it with his hands before sitting down in it, as if he wasn't sure it was real enough to hold him.

The two adults were still too stunned to speak.

"I would say your uncle was wrong, wouldn't you, Harry?" replied Professor Dumbledore lightly.

There was an uncomfortable silence for a minute before the professor spoke again.

"As you all know, I am here to decide what we are to do with young Harry here."

"He's staying with us," said Hermione firmly.

"I wish he could," replied the professor sadly. "I really do. But it's essential that he goes back to the Dursleys."

"Never," said Mrs. Granger, finally finding her voice.

Hermione walked over to Harry's chair and, much to his surprise, squeezed in beside him and put her arms around him. "I won't let you take him," she insisted.

"Hermione, there are reasons I cannot explain to you now, but Harry will be in grave danger from others in the magical world if he isn't living at the Dursleys."

Hermione screwed her eyes so they were narrow. "Why can't you explain to us?"

"I will explain to your parents, Hermione. But you are too young."

"Professor," began Mr. Granger. "If you are taking Harry back to that hell-hole, we probably can't stop you. But Harry has a right to know why, and we will tell him and Hermione the moment you have told us."

To his surprise, Professor Dumbledore nodded. "It is a long story," he warned.

"We're not going anywhere," said Mr. Granger, in a still decidedly unfriendly tone of voice.

"Very well. Harry. Have you ever noticed any strange things happening around you?"

"I ended up on the school roof once and didn't know how I got there. And when Aunt Petunia cut my hair really short, it grew back by the next morning. It made my uncle furious."

"That's because you are magical, Harry. Just like me."



"But I can't do things like... like this chair."

"Not yet, Harry. Not yet. But when you are older and come to my school, we will teach you to do many things, some of them much more impressive than simply conjuring a chair."

"What's cunghin?" asked Hermione.

"Conjuration is making something out of nothing, like this chair. It is just one of the things you will study at Hogwarts."

"Hogwarts?" asked Hermione.

At the same time Mrs. Granger asked, "Hermione?"

"Yes, Mrs. Granger. Your daughter is also magical, or as we say, a witch."

Harry sniggered slightly at the term and Hermione looked offended.

"It's not an insult, Hermione. Harry and I are both wizards, and a female wizard is a witch." He turned to the older Grangers. "I'm sure you have noticed strange unexplained things around your daughter sometimes."

Mr. Granger nodded slowly.

"Normally, you would have been informed about our world on Hermione's eleventh birthday, when she would have been invited to come to Hogwarts school the following September. Because of what has happened, I have had to come to explain it now."

"None of this explains why you want to take Harry back to those people," Hermione insisted.

"You don't miss anything, young lady. I am sure Professor McGonagal will look forward to having you in her class. You will be a fine student. In fact you remind me a little of Harry's mother when she was a girl. And she is the reason Harry must return to the Dursleys."

Something about the way he said that made Harry certain that he really would have to go back to the Dursleys. Up to that point he'd kept hoping that Mr. and Mrs. Granger wouldn't let him go. He shrank back into the chair not really wanting to listen any more, but desperate to hear more about his mother.

"My uncle says my mum and dad were deadbeat drunks."

The old man looked sad and wistful for a moment. "Your parents were two fine young people, Harry, and you should always remember that and be proud of them."

"Then why did they die in a car crash because my dad was drunk?"

The professor's eyes flashed angrily for a moment. "Harry, there is no easy way to say this. Your parents did not die in a car crash. They were murdered by a very evil wizard."

"Can you tell me what happened?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Yes, please."

Something of the desperation in the boy's voice made the professor nod and say, "Okay, Harry. Some years ago, an evil wizard called Voldemort began to attract followers. He hated what we call muggle-borns, that is wizards or witches with non magical parents, and he wanted to wipe them out. Your father's family had always opposed this and your mother was a muggle-born herself, just like Hermione is.

"There was a war in the wizarding world and many died. Your parents were part of a group fighting Voldemort and his supporters, as was I. But Voldemort was a powerful wizard and if he came to kill somebody, they died. He used a killing curse which nothing can defend against.

"One day, when you were about fifteen months old, he went to your house. He killed your father at the door, then walked to your bedroom to kill you, Harry."

Mr. Granger was beginning to regret insisting that the professor tell Harry all this, but it was too late now.

"Your mother begged for him not to kill you and wouldn't get out of the way. So he pushed her aside and killed her."

"The curse you mentioned. Does it have a green light?" asked Harry.

"Yes, Harry. Why?"

"I remember. Sometimes I have nightmares, my mother screaming, 'not Harry' and then there's green light and I don't remember any more." At that Hermione hugged Harry more tightly.

"That is the killing curse, Harry. He used it to kill your mother, then to complete the job, he turned it on you. But it bounced back at him and he disappeared and has never been seen since. You are the only person in history to survive the killing curse. You are famous in our world, Harry, as the boy who lived."

"How did it bounce back? And if Voldemort is dead now why does Harry have to go back to those people?" asked Hermione.

"Nobody knows for certain, but it seemed that Harry's mother, in sacrificing herself for Harry, invoked old magic and gave him a protection that Voldemort could not touch."

"But Voldemort is dead?" she asked.

"No, sadly. He had performed some dark magic so that he could not be completely killed. He will return one day, I am certain. And he still has followers, though they pretend not to be. And that is why Harry must return to the Dursleys."

"I don't understand," said Mrs. Granger.

"The protection Lily Potter gave to Harry is old blood magic. It continues so long as he is living with a blood relative, the closer the relative, the stronger the protection. Petunia Dursley, Lily's sister, is

the only blood relative Harry has. The protection is even stronger than anything I could provide for him."

"Didn't protect him from the Dursleys, though, did it?" asked Mr. Granger sullenly.

"No, it only works against Voldemort and his followers, and for that I am sorry, Harry."

"Sorry isn't good enough, if you are sending him back," snapped Hermione.

"No. It isn't good enough," the professor agreed, "but even with my magic, I cannot change the mistakes I have made. Harry, your mother was one of the nicest, kindest, most tolerant people I have ever known. I'm afraid that I simply did not believe that anyone who was Lily Potter's sister could be so different. Harry, I promise you, I will not allow you to be mistreated at the Dursleys' again. I give you my word."

"Do I really have to go back?"

"I wish there was another way to protect you. But Harry, if you don't go back, your mother sacrificing her life for you will have been in vain. She would have died for nothing."

"When do I have to go?" Harry sighed.

"If Hermione's parents don't mind, I can let you stay here for a few weeks, while I make preparations to protect you at the Dursleys'."

"Of course," said Mrs. Granger.

"Can we at least visit Harry?" asked Hermione. "I know it's a long drive, dad, but sometimes, please?" She had tears in her eyes.

"Hermione," said Professor Dumbledore. "Leave that to me. Your father won't have to drive and I will make sure that you can visit Harry at least once a week."

"Okay." She was still determined not to sound grateful to the old professor. She thought about what he had said, but she didn't have to like it.

"Now I must leave you. I will let you know a week before you must return, Harry, so you won't have to spend all the time worrying about whether I'll turn up and take you back."

"Professor?"

"Yes, Hermione?"

"There's one thing I don't understand."

"And what's that?"

"Why did Voldemort want to kill Harry?"

"He was killing whole families of those who opposed him," the professor answered.

"No," Hermione argued. "He killed Harry's father to get inside the house. Then you said he went straight to Harry's bedroom. He killed his mother because she wouldn't get out of the way, so he went there to kill Harry."

The professor sighed. "Yes, Hermione, he did. And very few people in the wizarding world know why. And Harry is safer that way. I'm afraid I cannot tell you, not until you and Harry are older."

To his surprise, Hermione didn't argue.

"Until we meet again," Professor Dumbledore said before turning slightly and disappearing before their eyes with a slight cracking sound.

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Author's note...

As I said in my note at the top, Dumbledore was correct in his decision to send Harry to the Dursleys. But, and this is a big but, the Order of the Phoenix scaring the daylight out of the Dursleys after Dumbledore's death made them stop ill-treating Harry and just ignore him instead. Dumbledore was wrong not to supervise and very wrong not to keep the Dursleys in line. So despite Voldemort's comments, Dumbledore does not emerge blameless for Harry's treatment at the hands of the Dursleys.

Hermione. There is a beautiful story called "A better man" by Valandar, which starts by retelling canon and explores the changes which would happen simply by Vernon being nice and accepting Harry. One seemingly small change which brought about much bigger changes.

Hermione, in this story, is like that. The shock of seeing the results of Harry's ill-treatment at first hand at such a young age has already changed one thing about Hermione's character. She is beginning to be ready to challenge authority, whereas the canon Hermione, at the start anyway, is horrified by the thought of challenging authority. Even in the last book where experience has modified that attitude, she still trusts Dumbledore's judgement after his death. Hermione in this story is far less likely to trust Dumbledore right from the start, which is bound to cause a few changes. And that's not even considering the effects of the soul bond, which is bound to cause changes to them both. One non-magical effect of that is that neither of them will be friendless loners when they first go to Hogwarts. Hagrid and Ron won't be Harry's first friends... or will they?

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter five.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

Harry has been told that he must return to the Dursleys.

Author's note...

Sorry for the long delay, moving was (and still is) chaos and I've been simply too tired to write. Slowly getting organised, so things should improve.

To Dana (and any others who thought the same). I said that according to Voldemort himself, Dumbledore was correct in sending Harry to the Dursleys, but I also said that "was wrong not to supervise and very wrong not to keep the Dursleys in line... Dumbledore does not emerge blameless for Harry's treatment at the hands of the Dursleys." In my opinion, especially after McGonagal's warning, Dumbledore had no excuse for that neglect.

After Voldemort returned at the end of GOF, the argument for Harry staying at the Dursleys is very weak and I believe JKR only had him stay there for dramatic reasons. Certainly the "protection" was weak, as shown by the Dementor attack shortly afterwards, though remember they were sent by Umbitch NOT by Voldemort and the protection was against Voldemort and his supporters and there is no evidence that Umbridge was a supporter of Voldemort at that stage.

I am sure that Hermione's first-hand knowledge Dumbledore's previous neglect of Harry will change her reaction to him from that in canon, and that will have consequences.

HPGWnever asked where Dumbledore got the authority to place Harry in the first place. Firstly he was leader of the Order of the

Phoenix, to which James and Lily belonged, and with a Voldemort infiltrated Ministry, they would not take the risk of allowing the Ministry to place him. Secondly, he was leader of the Wizengamot, the wizard's "supreme court", so if it came to authority you couldn't go much higher.

Minor corrections this time to chapter 3 and well as chapter 4 for those who are saving the story.

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To their surprise, Professor Dumbledore returned the following day, asking to speak to Harry alone. Afterwards, he left with a face that Hermione could best describe as "like thunder", while Harry was very quiet for the rest of the day.

When Hermione asked him what the professor had wanted with him, he just shrugged and replied, "He just wanted to know what it was like at the Dursleys."

Overhearing that reply, Mr. Granger snorted and muttered to his wife, "He's supposed to be this great powerful wizard. Why didn't he KNOW?"

"We don't know what he can and can't do, dear," his wife replied.

"Well, he should have checked, made sure he was okay."

"I'm not arguing. I think he knows that now."

"Just a few years too late."

- - - - -

Dumbledore had been as gentle as he could, coaxing the truth out of Harry about his time at the Dursleys. He had tried to verify the truth by probing his mind the night before, but it had proved amazingly unsuccessful, which he assumed was another early result of the bond. In any case he wanted to hear it from Harry's own words.



It was a far-from-gentle Dumbledore who knocked on the Dursleys' door that evening. It was opened by a tearful Petunia. "You?" she cried.

"Hello, Petunia. Long time no see."

"Harry's not here."

"I know."

"This isn't a good time."

"What was it you used to say to Harry when he was sad about not having any parents? Hard luck? I think that phrase might be appropriate here. May I come in?" It was emphatically not a request and Petunia backed away from the door.

"Who's this?" stormed Vernon as the professor entered the lounge.

"This is... er..."

"I am Professor Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards."

If he had expected to impress them, he was sorely disappointed as Vernon bellowed, "So you're the one that left that freak here. He's always been more trouble than he's worth. Now he's gone and got Dudley into trouble."

"I left Harry here, with the only family he has, thinking you would love him as your own."

"Our own? That? He's, he's a..."

"A wizard, like me," interrupted the professor firmly. "And unfortunately he has to return to you. He needs the protection only a close blood relative can give. And Petunia is the closest he has."

"I'm not having him back here. Why should I? Our own son has been..." instead of finishing his anger turned into a spluttering fit.

"Your own son has been caught for the bully he is, and will be tried for the injuries he gave Harry. As for you..."

"I've never beaten the boy. If I had, perhaps we'd have got this nonsense out of him."

"No, you haven't. He told me that himself. He said you were rough with him..."

"That's a lie!"

"He said you were rough with him, but no more. But instead of giving him love, you've shown him hatred, instead of care, you've half starved him, neglected him, and used him as a virtual slave."

"No more than the freak deserves."

The professor looked at Vernon Dursley for a moment and said quietly, "Use that word once more and you will regret it."

Their eyes met and Vernon saw cold fury in the older man's eyes.

"Now. For your crimes, not only could you be tried before a muggle court for neglect and abuse, but I could have you brought before the highest wizarding court, of whom I am Chief Warlock. But I have an offer for you. Take Harry back, give him a proper room, decent meals, and no more work than you give Dudley. Do that, and I will not interfere with the neglect charge already being considered but I will ensure you face no more charges."

"What about Dudley?" asked Petunia.

"Dudley will face the charges being brought against him for injuring Harry."

"But it was just boyish high spirits!"

"Petunia Dursley. Your son is a vicious bully because you two allowed him to be. Think yourself lucky that I healed Harry's injuries and therefore the only evidence will be the initial X-rays. If you have any sense, you will tell your son to plead guilty and my contacts will see to it that he receives no more than six months in a borstal, where, perhaps, he might learn some lessons you two have singularly failed to teach him."

"Don't talk about Dudley like that," snapped Vernon.

At the same time Petunia gasped, "But the neighbours..."

"Think yourself lucky that the only X-rays the court will see are his recent injuries. They have been altered to hide the history of how you really allowed your son to treat Harry. But if you don't agree to my offer, they can be altered back just as easily and your precious son will serve a lot more than six months, as will you for allowing it to go on under your roof for so long, especially as there is not a single record of you ever taking Harry to a hospital for treatment."

"I won't be spoken to this way," Vernon blustered.

"Professor, would you leave us for a minute. Please?" begged Petunia.

Dumbledore nodded and stepped outside the house.

A few minutes later, Petunia came out to get him. He followed her inside silently.

"We agree to your offer," she said. "It seems we have no choice. But let Dudley be released."

"Dudley will serve his time," said the professor firmly. "He has a lesson to learn and without it who knows what his future will be?"

"And us?"

"You will be charged with neglect. Be glad it is nothing more. Harry will be returned in one month."

Vernon muttered something under his breath. The old professor chose not to hear it.

"I will be paying visits to Harry sometimes, and you can expect other visits as well. The girl who found him will be visiting at least once or twice a week. And you will not be able to hide how Harry is treated from her. She will know. Just as she knew when she found him."

"Another fre...?" Vernon's voice suddenly disappeared into nothingness.

"You may speak again when I have gone. Now I am trusting you to treat Harry well this time. If you do not, the courts are the least of your worries. I could send you to Azkaban."

"What's Azkaban?" Vernon whispered, unable to find his voice.

"Petunia will tell you. Just be glad I have need of you, or you would be there already, all three of you. Now. I go."

A sudden crack and Dumbledore was gone.

- - - - -

Professor Dumbledore had a reason for not returning Harry to the Dursley for a month. He was worried about the soul bond between Harry and Hermione. From what he could see, the physical need for closeness had obviously faded, the two had slept in separate bedrooms with no ill effects, but he wanted to observe them over the next month, perhaps separate them once or twice, to see what happened. Up to now, there didn't seem to be any other effects of the soul bond. They were probably too young for it to take effect.

Harry, of course, knew none of this. He was having the time of his life, happier than he had ever been. The only shadow on his happiness was the knowledge that he would soon be returning to the Dursleys.

He had quickly made up his mind to enjoy every moment with Hermione and her family. To his surprise, Professor Dumbledore had visited them every few days just to see how he was getting on.

On one of those visits, Hermione asked, "Are there any books I can read, to learn about being a witch and magic and stuff?"

He smiled. "Yes, there are. With your parents permission, why don't I take you to a magical bookshop, and I can even help you choose?" He turned to Harry. "I'm sorry, Harry. I can't take you as well. You would be recognised and that would put Hermione and her family in danger."

Harry and Hermione accepted that sadly, not knowing that the professor could easily have changed Harry's appearance if he had wanted to do so. But taking Hermione on her own served his purpose, to see what would happen if the two children were far apart.

Her parents' initial reluctance was overcome by Hermione's sheer enthusiasm for being able to get books on magic, so they agreed that the professor could take her.

"Don't worry about your daughter, Mrs. Granger. I will take the utmost care of her."

The very next day, the professor kept his promise to take Hermione to the bookshop. Making their gas fire disappear, he enlarged the fireplace so that they could both stand in it. Pulling some powder from his pocket, he threw it down, saying "Diagon Alley" and both he and Hermione disappeared in a flash of green flame, much to the shock of Harry and the Grangers.

The professor held onto Hermione and prevented her from falling as they landed in the fireplace in the Leaky Cauldron. "Professor, sir," said the barman. "Can I help you at all?"

"Not now, thank you, Tom," Dumbledore had replied, "but we will return later for some lunch if that's alright with you."

"Of course, Sir."

Professor Dumbledore had another reason for taking Hermione to Diagon Alley, and it soon became evident that it was working. As almost every witch and wizard greeted them and showed obvious respect to the old professor, Hermione began to sense how important Professor Dumbledore was. So many wanted to speak to him that the bookshop staff had had to guide Hermione around, rather than the professor himself, as he had originally planned.

She spent a pleasant few hours exploring the bookshop before Dumbledore took her back to the Leaky Cauldron, where they had arrived, for lunch. A number of people came over to speak to the professor until finally Tom cast some sort of spell and nobody seemed to see them any more.

If anyone had been curious about the young girl with the Professor, they kept their questions to themselves.

After lunch, the professor treated Hermione to some ice cream, then he looked at the strange looking watch he had, and decided, "Time to go. I have some business in the wizengamot this afternoon."

"What's the wizen...?" began Hermione.

"You can read about it," the professor replied, smiling.

Hermione didn't need quite as much help to not fall over when they landed back in the floo at her parents' house.

Her mother embraced her. "I was so worried, when you disappeared like that."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Granger. That is just one of our magical forms of transport. As you can see it is quite safe, so long as you know where you are going. I trust Harry is okay?"

"Yes, of course. Shouldn't he be?"

"Of course. And, now, I must be going."

He instantly returned the Grangers' fireplace to its former state and he disappeared with a slight crack. He arrived at the Ministry smiling, satisfied that the two children could now be separated without any harm coming to them.

Meanwhile, Hermione rushed upstairs with her books, jumped onto her bed, and began to read...

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Author's note...

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter six.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

Dedication.

This chapter is dedicated to the memory of actor Rob Knox, murdered by a knife-man a few days ago, according to the Daily Telegraph newspaper, while protecting his younger brother. Rob played Marcus Belby, one of the "slug club", in the upcoming film, Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince. May I express my best wishes to his family (who will probably never see this page) and the hope that Warner Brothers will make a more meaningful dedication than this page, in the film credits.

In the previous chapter...

Dumbledore visited the Dursleys and took Hermione to Diagon Alley.

Author's note...

A couple of reviewers have now mentioned the Dursleys and computer records. I've replied to them separately, but at the end of the chapter is the gist of the situation...

- - - - -

The social worker had arranged to meet with Harry's head teacher. "Thank you for agreeing to meet with me so promptly."

"You're welcome," replied the head teacher. "Harry Potter, isn't it? Quiet boy, but a bit of a troublemaker, climbing the school roof, making accusations against other boys, including his cousin. Never bothers much with school work, though we think he cheated in a test once. What's he been up to now?"



Without answering, the social worker asked, "Climbed the school roof? Did he say why?"

"No. Claimed he didn't know how he got there. Made up a lot of lies about his cousin and some other boys bullying him. Fine family, his cousin's. Father went to my old school, you know. They took the lad in out of the goodness of their hearts, and he's nothing but trouble to them."

"Really? Then it would surprise you to learn, no doubt, that he has been forced to live in a dirty cupboard for most of his life, and that his X-rays show numerous minor injuries, all perpetrated by his wonderful cousin and his friends, none of which had ever been treated properly in a hospital."

"Impossible."

"Perhaps you'd care to see the report?" She handed the headmaster the files on Harry and Dudley. "I'd look at the X-rays first, if I were you."

The headmaster's eyes turned to disbelief and shock as he read. "I... We never knew."

"So I gathered. It seems that any bullying at school was ignored as well as at home. I'd very much like to know WHY you never knew one of your students was being consistently neglected and abused at home and bullied at school. He was very underweight, for a start. Had no clothes that actually fit him. He must have shown he was in pain with some of the old injuries. Why was his case never reported to us?"

"I... I don't know," the headmaster admitted.

"I think it was that you chose to believe the word of your old school friend and ignore what your own eyes should have been telling you. Are there any more children here I should be interested in?"

"I don't think so."

"That's not good enough. I suggest you contact County Education. They have a training pack for teachers on spotting and dealing with abuse and bullying. It seems to me that you all need it."

The headmaster nodded.

"We are holding a case conference for the two boys next week. I'd appreciate it if you could attend."

"Of course."

"Very well. I can see myself out."

- - - - -

While Harry was having the time of his life and enjoying himself immensely at the Grangers, the Dursleys certainly weren't enjoying themselves. Dumbledore's mention of borstal had scared the two adult Dursleys into seeking an urgent meeting with the social worker.

"No," she said, "Dudley will not be going to a borstal. For a start we don't call them that any more, and secondly Dudley is too young. In fact he will not face a criminal trial. He is below what we call the age of criminal responsibility. I believe your professor was from Scotland."

Vernon snorted at the description, "your professor", but Petunia just answered "Yes."

"That explains it. Scotland has a different legal system from England, and there the criminal age of responsibility is eight years old, not ten as it is in England. And Dudley is eight isn't he?"

"Yes. So he can come home?"

"No. At the moment both he and Harry are under emergency care orders. The case conference plan to have that extended to six months. Harry will be returned to you, while Dudley has already been placed in a training centre to teach him how to handle his aggression and that bullying is not acceptable. I will be honest. I opposed Harry being returned to you, but when your Professor asked to speak at the

case conference, claiming to represent Harry's dead parents, the others in the conference decided to overrule me. As far as I am concerned, you aren't fit to raise any child. That cupboard was disgusting. And to think that you made a child live there."

Vernon looked ready to lose his temper at that, but the social worker continued without stopping.

"Both children are now on the at-risk register. You can of course fight the care order in court, but given Harry's injuries and the conditions in which he was found, I would strongly advise against attempting to do so. Dudley will be returned to you at the end of six months, provided, and only provided, that Harry is treated well in the meantime, otherwise I will be seeking an extension to the care order."

She waited for her threat to sink in, then continued. "I understand that the Grangers will be visiting at least once a week, and I will be liaising with his school. They were rather surprised to hear the truth about Harry's living conditions and Dudley's bullying, so they will be keeping a very close eye on him. If he is not treated properly, he will be removed from your care and it is unlikely that you will have either child back for a very long time, if ever."

"Can we visit Dudley?" Petunia asked hesitantly.

"Of course you can. You can visit any weekend for one whole day if you wish, and one evening visit during the week if it is a school week, or for the whole day if it is a school holiday. And IF I am satisfied with Harry's treatment, I will allow you to take Dudley home for two days at Christmas."

Vernon continued to look ready to explode at any moment, but Petunia merely replied, "Right. Thank you."

"Oh, and Mrs. Dursley. I can recommend some anger-management classes for your husband if you wish."

Petunia hurried Vernon out quickly before her furious husband had a chance to reply to that himself.

-----

To the Grangers and Harry, all too soon came the time for Harry to return to the Dursleys, in time to start the new school year.

Hermione had argued when the professor insisted on taking Harry back on Sunday 21st August, pointing out that school wouldn't start for another eleven days, but Professor Dumbledore explained that he wanted to give Harry time to settle back in, and him returning before school started meant that Hermione would be able to visit him every day at first. That mollified her anger somewhat.

The Professor had arrived at the Grangers' home, and explained that he was going to apparate with them to the Dursleys'. Only Hermione and Harry had any idea what that meant. Hermione because she had eagerly studied all the books on wizarding life she had brought back from Diagon Alley, and Harry because Hermione had made him read some.

The others were nervous about side-along apparating, as Hermione explained to them was it's proper term, especially after she had also, much to Professor Dumbledore's amusement, explained the dangers of splinching. Hermione, however, was eager to try it.

"Don't worry," said the professor with a twinkle, "I haven't splinched anyone in many a year." And he disappeared with Hermione.

After leaving her in the Dursleys' back garden, he went back for Harry and then did a double side-along with Hermione's parents.

"I think I prefer driving," gasped Hermione's father.

"It does take some getting used to," laughed the professor.

They walked round to the front door and the professor knocked loudly.

Petunia opened the door. "Oh, it's you."

"Petunia," the professor replied, almost as if greeting a long lost friend. "I have brought Harry, as promised. And may I introduce Mr.

And Mrs. Granger and their daughter, Hermione. They will be visiting Harry at least once a week."

"You'd better come in." She didn't want any of the neighbours seeing the professor. He always seemed to dress in such a weird way.

"Of course. And I'm sure you will want to show Harry to his new room, won't you?"

"Er... Yes. Harry. You have Dudley's second bedroom."

"My own bedroom?" He raced upstairs with his bag of clothes. Hermione followed him.

A few minutes later she came down crying.

"What's the matter?" asked her mother.

"We can't leave him here. You haven't seen it."

Professor Dumbledore pushed past Petunia and followed Hermione upstairs. The room was full of junk, mostly broken toys.

"What's in the attic?" he asked.

"Nothing, why?"

The professor took out his wand, and, ignoring the fear in Petunia's eyes, waved it. "Now the rubbish is in the attic."

"The bed's horrible, Professor," said Hermione.

"It's not so bad," argued Harry.

The Professor sat on the bed. "Ouch. I see what you mean Hermione." Another wave of the wand and the broken springs disappeared and the mattress expanded to be soft and thick. "Try now, Hermione."

She sat down. "That's better."

Mr. Granger disappeared with Professor Dumbledore for a minute and returned with a box which he carried up to Harry's room. "Open it, Harry," Hermione squealed excitedly. "It's presents."

"Presents. For me? I've never had... Except for the clothes you bought me, of course, Auntie Jean." After Harry had been with them for just over a week, the Grangers had persuaded Harry to call them Uncle David and Auntie Jean.

Jean Granger gave Petunia a glare that should probably have killed her on the spot, while Hermione looked like she was going to cry again.

Harry opened the box to find a small portable television and a combined radio and tape and CD player. "Wow!"

While nobody else was looking, Dumbledore slipped downstairs and cast a charm on the cupboard door. "That should do it," he thought to himself, before creeping back up the stairs again.

Once they were downstairs, they joined Vernon in the lounge. He seemed to be doing his best to ignore them all and was watching television until with a brief hand-movement from Professor Dumbledore, it went off.

"Now, Mr. and Mrs. Dursley. It was agreed with the social worker that the Grangers will visit Harry every Sunday. I am converting your fireplace so it can be connected to the floo network. Hermione will come to visit Harry any evening she wishes to do so, provided her parents agree, of course."

"I suppose we have no say in this," murmured Vernon Dursley.

"No," replied the professor shortly. "You don't."

"What do you mean by converting the fireplace?"

Dumbledore waved his hand and the Gas fire disappeared, to be replaced by an open fireplace.

"Draughty."

Another wave and a neat board appeared, blocking the fireplace. It was hinged at one side.

"And what do we do for heating?"

"Personally I always love a nice log fire to come home to," the professor replied in a wistful tone.

Vernon's reply was unrepeatable.

"Now. As well as Hermione visiting regularly, I will be paying the odd visit myself, as will a few trusted friends of mine."

"I'm not having more of your kind here."

"If you would prefer Azkaban?"

Petunia had obviously told Vernon about Azkaban as he turned away from them and said no more.

"That's settled then. Good. Now how about some tea, Petunia?"

Harry managed not to laugh as Petunia huffed and left the room to get them some tea.

Vernon took advantage of the moment to follow his wife and leave the "freaks" alone.

"Now. Hermione. Take a little of this powder. You need to step into the fireplace, throw the powder down and say very clearly, The Grangers' house. To return here, do the same, but say The Dursleys' house. Can you do that?"

Hermione looked at him like he was insulting her intelligence and took some powder. "Save enough for the journey back. Now try it."

She disappeared in a green flash. Less than a minute later, she fell out of the fireplace. "The landings take a bit of practice, I've found," the old professor commented.

Hermione picked herself up. "Now the floo has another use. Throw down some powder, speak very clearly Professor McGonagall, and put your face into the flames." At her worried look, he assured her, "It's quite safe, I assure you."

"Professor McGonagall?"

"That's right."

Hermione threw down some powder, yelled Professor McGonagall and found herself looking up at another room. A tall thin woman was sitting at a desk, writing.

"Hello, my dear," she said, not appearing the least bit surprised. "You must be Hermione Granger. I've heard so much about you."

"Er. Yes I am."

"As I'm sure you have guessed, I am Professor McGonagall. I teach here at Hogwarts."

"This is Hogwarts?"

"Just my office. You'd probably better get back now, but you can call me any time you need me."

"Thank you, professor."

Hermione pulled her head from the flames and they disappeared. "That was amazing."

"You can call me in the same way. And Harry, you can call me, Professor McGonagall or Hermione whenever you want to. I would suggest Hermione, that you don't call Harry. There's no need to annoy the Dursleys more than necessary."



After Petunia had returned and they had all drunk their tea, they returned to the Grangers in the same way as they had come, except for Hermione, who decided she wanted to practice going by floo.

Jean Granger could tell as she left that Harry was determined not to cry in front of them.

Later that night, she asked her daughter why she'd been so upset at the Dursleys. "Mum, you didn't see him. We went into that awful junk room before the professor cleared it. And Harry was pleased because it was so much better than his cupboard. He's never had anything good before, Mum. No decent bed. No presents. I know the professor says that he has to go back, but they hate him, Mum. How can they hate him like that?"

Pulling her crying daughter into a hug, she stroked her hair, "I don't know, darling. We'll just have to show him that we love him, won't we?"

"I feel selfish too," Hermione sniffed.

"Why?"

"I was sad because I won't have a friend at school after all, when Harry won't have anyone at home either."

"I suspect he'll have you there, quite often."

Hermione nodded. "I still land flat on my face when I travel by floo. I wonder if there's a book I can read about doing it?"

"I think you just need to practice, darling. You've only just started doing it. You'll get the hang of it soon enough."

"I'll just have to practice a lot," grinned Hermione, making her mother laugh.

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Author's note... The Dursleys' abuse and computer records...

Here I speak from experience, having been involved with hospitals and social workers and the legal system in England around the years in which the HP books are set. I cannot speak for more recent changes, of which there have been a lot.

At that time, the hospital records will purely be medical, and Dumbledore has already affected the Doctor's memory. Apart from urgent treatment notes, most junior doctors in Casualty (also known as A&E or in the United States as ER) like the doctor who would have attended Harry's comparatively minor injuries do not have time to make extensive notes at the time, but would have done so at the end of their shift.

In any case, the hospital's legal duty was to inform the police (which they wouldn't have done as the police brought Harry into the hospital anyway) and/or social services (if the police hadn't already done so). Beyond that they would do nothing apart from medical treatment.

Social services were and are terribly overworked and understaffed and once a child is considered to be in a safe place, like the Grangers, they will leave any prosecution to the police, with otherwise minimal follow-up from social services. That said, the social worker will no doubt be informed that Harry is living with the Dursleys again and will try her best to keep an eye IF she has time between more urgent cases as she will know he is being visited by the Grangers regularly and they can be trusted to report abuse.

The police - the older Dursleys are guilty, legally, of neglect more than abuse. In many fanfics Harry is beaten by the adult Dursleys, but NOT in cannon and not in my story up to now anyway. In fact in book one Vernon Dursley says regretfully that a good beating might have driven that nonsense (magic) out of him. With Dumbledore healing the worst of Harry's injuries, the police might even leave it totally to Social Services. The only more serious factor would be locking him in a cupboard and that would make social services (and possibly the police) take the matter more seriously.

Obviously I'm not saying yet what WILL happen in the story, I'm saying what WOULD probably have happened hypothetically in a case at that time.

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter seven.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

The social worker visited Harry's school and met the Dursleys. Harry was taken back to the Dursleys...

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The next morning was marked by a strange similarity between the Dursley and Granger households. Silence. In the Dursley household, in the absence of Dudley and afraid of the consequences, the adult Dursleys had simply decided to ignore Harry as much as possible. Harry, as usual, didn't speak unless he was spoken to. He wasn't allowed to cook any more which put Petunia in a bad mood, which, as she was afraid to take it out on Harry, she took out on Vernon, blaming him for allowing "her Dudley" to be taken away. To Harry's surprise, she actually gave him more food than before, if not as much as he had been given at the Grangers.

The silence in the Granger household was for a very different reason. Hermione, having supposedly understood the reason for Harry having to go back to the Dursleys, spent most of her morning in her room alone. Any attempt to get her to socialise, or go out, even to the library, was met with a tearful shake of the head.

The night before she had woken up frequently from the same nightmare, over and over again, a woman she somehow felt was her mother crying out. But it wasn't her mother, she knew that. And every dream ended with a horrible green flash of light and nasty-sounding laughter.

When Professor Dumbledore came to take Hermione to the Dursleys the next day (he had wanted to take Hermione the first time), he was surprised at the lack of enthusiasm Harry and Hermione showed when they met.

"Hi," said Hermione.

"Hi."

"How are you, Harry."

"Okay. You?"

"Okay."

Silence.

"Well, now I'm here, what shall we do?"

"Don't know. What do you want to do?"

"I asked first."

More silence from Harry.

"Well, if you two are okay, I'll see you both later," said the Professor. Unable to decide if their lack of enthusiasm to see each other was a good or bad thing, he left them together and apparated away. Perhaps the bond wasn't taking, although he'd never heard of such a thing happening before. If so, it would certainly simplify matters.

When he'd gone Hermione asked Harry, "Are they treating you okay?"

"Okay."

"Shall we go down the town?"

"If you like."

So they walked down to the town centre, nearly forty minutes walk. Without any clear idea of what they wanted to do, their time together dragged. They finally ended up in a café, where Harry had a coke and an ice cream, while Hermione had a tea and an ice cream.

"I'll bring some of my magic books next time," she promised.

Harry just nodded.

"I suppose we'd better be getting back," Hermione said, feeling slightly guilty at the feeling of relief that the visit was almost over. Perhaps the weekend visit with her parents would be better.

Once Professor Dumbledore had taken her home, she went to her room and cried.

"I thought he'd be so happy to see me," she explained to her mother later.

"And he wasn't?"

"No. And then we were bored."

"I'm sure the next visit will be better," her mother reassured her. "He probably just feels awkward you seeing him back there. How are they treating him?"

"Okay, he said. He didn't say much."

If Mrs. Granger thought it was unlike her daughter to be satisfied with an "Okay" without pressing for more details, she kept the thought to herself.

Unknown to each other, both children cried themselves to sleep that night.

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Hermione flooded to visit Harry each day, but they seemed awkward with each other and she had to admit that she wasn't enjoying the visits at all. Hermione's increasing sullenness worried her parents greatly.

The weekend visit was better, but not much. The Granger parents, who had driven down rather than using the floo, so that they could drive the two children to Birghton, as Harry had never seen the seaside, were as startled as Professor Dumbledore had been by the lack of enthusiasm from both Hermione and Harry.

"They aren't hurting you are they?" Mrs. Granger asked Harry quietly.

"No."

"Are they giving you enough food?"

"It's okay."

"They aren't making you cook or anything?"

"No. They don't even speak if they don't have to," he answered.

"I know it must be hard," Mrs. Granger said, determined not to cry in front of Harry. "But you know we love you, don't you?"

Harry turned to look at her, his eyes wide with surprise, then they quickly filled up with tears. "You love me?" he asked, chokingly.

"Yes. Harry. Hasn't anyone ever said that to you before?"

He shook his head.

Unable to speak, Mrs. Granger just hugged Harry close to her, trying to make sure he didn't see her own tears. Evil wizards or not, she decided, no child should have to live like this.

When they dropped Harry off at home, Mrs. Granger said quietly to her daughter, "I think Harry could really do with one of your special hugs right now."

Hermione got out of the car and raced after Harry, and startled him totally by hugging him tightly.

Feeling slightly embarrassed, but nothing like how embarrassed Harry was, Hermione said, "I'll see you soon," and ran back to the car.

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The following week two amazing things happened. One went almost unnoticed, except by Petunia Dursley. Halfway through dinner, Harry, pushed his plate away, saying he wasn't hungry, and he took himself to bed early. A startled Petunia decided to keep what had happened to herself. But if he was getting ill, they'd have to take him to a doctor this time or they'd be in trouble.

The other took place in London. Hermione, having read all the magical books she'd got when she went there with Professor Dumbledore, decided she wanted some more. From her brief use of the floo before, she knew you just had to say where you were going. She wondered if it would work for Diagon Alley. She threw down some of the powder the professor had left with them and called out loudly, "Diagon Alley."

A few minutes later, Tom the barman was showing her how to enter the alley itself and she quickly found the bookshop.

"Can't accept muggle money," she was told. "You'll have to go to Gringotts."

"Where?"

"Wizard bank. To change your money." He pointed in the direction of the biggest building there.

Feeling nervous of the goblins, Hermione took a deep breath and stepped up to the counter where one of them was working. "I'd like to change some money please?"



"So you have an account with us?"

"Er. No. Do I have to?"

"Not to change money, no. But you're a witch, you should open an account with us."

"Does it cost a lot?" she asked, thinking she didn't have a lot of money with her and wishing that she'd brought more.

"Not to open it, no. Give me your hand."

She put out her hand and was surprised when the goblin stuck a pin in her finger. "Ow! What d'you do that for?" she asked, sucking her finger.

"To make your key, so it will only work for you."

"Oh."

The goblin left her at the counter while he took the bloodied paper with him. He came back a few minutes later holding a key and looking surprised.

"You already have a vault," he said. "Your parents left it for you."

"But they can't have. I'm muggle born."

"As you wish, Mrs..."

"I'm not a Mrs.," Hermione laughed. "I'm Hermione Granger."

"That is what you wish to be called?" The goblin seemed puzzled.

"That's my name."

"As you wish, Mrs. Granger."

"Miss Granger," she corrected him.

He looked sternly at her as though he didn't approve. "As you wish. Now would you like to see your vault?"

"Yes please."

The crazy ride down to the vault would be something she would never forget, but the surprise at the end made the ride seem positively dull. He handed her her key. "Put your key in that key-hole," instructed the goblin. The key seemed to warm up in her hand for a moment, then the sensation was gone.

The vault door swung open to reveal piles and piles of gold, silver and bronze coins, and a lot of papers and golden cups and boxes of jewellery.

"There's got to be a mistake," she said. "This can't be mine."

"Gringotts does not make mistakes," the goblin sniffed haughtily.

"But it has to be."

"Do you want to make a withdrawal or not?"

"Er. Yes. How much do I need?"

The goblin's eyes rolled heavenward, as though he thought she was completely stupid. Hermione quickly grabbed a handful of the gold ones and said, "Okay, I'm ready."

She wanted to ask the goblin why he'd wanted to call her Mrs, but was too nervous to do so. She wished she hadn't interrupted him. It would have been interesting to know who he thought she actually was.

She felt a little guilty about taking the money from a vault that couldn't have been hers, but decided that she could pay it back after she'd asked Professor Dumbledore what it was all about. She was sure he'd know.

Thinking for a minute, she realised that she couldn't be sure that he'd actually tell her what she wanted to know. She was sure he'd told them the minimum he could get away with. It was time to do her own research on what had happened to her.

The bookshop was crowded but she finally found an assistant to help her. "Some weird things have happened lately, but I'm muggleborn, so I don't know much. A few weeks ago I found out I was a witch and there's some things I don't understand. But I don't know which books to look at."

"I'll help you if I can," said the friendly witch in front of her.

"Well, according to my parents, it started when I met..." she hesitated suddenly, thinking it might be best not to give his name... "this boy. And apparently I collapsed when we touched. The doctors couldn't move me away or I stopped breathing. And since then, during the day, I suddenly get sad or angry for no reason, when I'm not sad or angry. And at night, it's like I'm dreaming someone else's dream. Does that sound stupid?"

The witch didn't look as though she thought Hermione was stupid. She looked astonished. Hermione didn't seem to notice.

"And another thing. Do Goblins normally try to call girls Mrs?"

This time she noticed the stunned look on the woman's face. "They called you Mrs? Mrs who?"

"I don't know. I stopped him before he could say the name. Does it mean anything? Or is it normal?"

"No," the woman replied. "It isn't normal. This boy. Is he a wizard or a muggle?"

"Er... A wizard. Is it important?"

"Could be. And do you have any feelings for him?"

"What do you mean?"

"Hmm. No. You're much too young. You say you suddenly feel sad or angry. Is this when he is sad or angry?"

"I don't really know. I think he's sad most of the time, and angry too."

"If you were much older, I'd say you were bonded. When wizards and witches get married, there is a spell which bonds them. If their marriage bond is strong, quite often they can feel each other's feelings to some extent."

"But I'm not married."

"Of course you're not. You're too young anyway. But it's odd. It sounds like some sort of bond. Are you close to this boy?"

"Not really. He lived at my house for a month or so, that's all."

Someone else was wanting the assistant's help, so she shook her head. "I don't really know dear." She turned to shout "Be with you in a minute," then continued to Hermione, "there's an old book back here. It goes on about all kinds of bonds, not just marriage bonds and family bonds, but also the rare ones like blood bonds. I shouldn't really let you have it at your age as it also includes dark bonds."

"Dark bonds?"

"Ones to make someone your slave. But you wouldn't want to know about them. But it's the only book we've got on bonds anyway, if you want it. It's been here for centuries. Most people are only interested in the books on marriage and family bonds, they are more modern, much easier to read..."

"I'll take it."

Hermione showed the books she'd already picked up on modern wizarding history, then handed over money the assistant asked for and left the shop.

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Author's note...

WOW! Over 200 reviews for the first six chapters. Thanks everyone.

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter eight.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

Hermione has bought a book on bonds, while Dumbledore wonders if her and Harry's bond is taking at all.

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Hermione was relieved that being back at school gave her an excuse not to visit Harry every day. She was sure that her feelings of unhappiness and anger were coming from him somehow. She felt guilty about that feeling, but when she had flooed to see him, he had always seemed to want her to go again as quickly as possible.

While Hermione was worrying about Harry, her mother was worrying about Hermione. She wasn't eating properly, had lost interest in all her educational programmes on the television and was even late for school twice.

As far as Harry was concerned, his first two days back at school had been a vast improvement on his previous years at school. Somehow word had got out that Dudley had been sent away for bullying Harry, so even Piers didn't come near him, which suited Harry just fine.

His teachers were less happy, however. Despite under performing in tests because he was scared to appear better than Dudley, Harry had always shown an interest in class. They now found that he wasn't very interested in anything. One of his teachers had even asked him about this, but Harry hadn't been forthcoming about the reason.

Hermione's teachers were also surprised that Hermione seemed distracted during lessons, something unheard of for the normally studious Hermione Granger.

Things finally came to a head at the weekend. A wizard called Remus had come to apparate them to the Dursleys. He said he was an old friend of Harry's parents. He looked with concern at Hermione and felt her forehead. "Hmm. She's hot." He added, "I'm not sure you should visit Harry this weekend. He might catch whatever it is you've got."

"He's the same," Hermione replied.

Once they had been apparated to the Dursleys', Remus allowed Hermione to introduce him to Harry. Harry flinched away, not wanting Remus to touch him. "He's hot too. I don't like it."

Throwing some powder into the fireplace, he called out Madam Pomfrey and stuck his head in the fire. The rest of them couldn't hear what he said until he pulled his head away again. "She's coming right away."

"Who is?" asked Hermione.

"Madam Pomfrey, mediwitch. Runs the hospital wing at Hogwarts."

A couple of minutes later, both Professor Dumbledore and Madam Pomfrey had arrived by floo.

Having waved her wand briefly over the two children, she turned to the professor aghast. "This isn't possible. At their age?"

"I'm afraid it is," the professor contradicted her.

"Why didn't you tell me they were bonded? In a pair so young and inexperienced anything could go wrong. They should have been supervised." She turned to Hermione's parents. "How has Hermione been? Tell me everything you can."

"She's not eating properly, I don't think she's sleeping well either, and she has nightmares she won't talk about. And she seems to have lost interest in everything. She was late for school on her first day back

and Hermione is never late for school. She's not even reading much and usually she's reading almost all the time she can."

"Is the bonding causing this condition?" asked Professor Dumbledore.

"Yes. You say they've been living apart?"

"Yes. It was necessary. Harry must be protected from death eaters."

"Not any more. Keep them apart and you'll kill them both."

The professor didn't get a chance to answer. "We'll take Harry home with us. Will that cure them?"

"It will help," Madam Pomfrey replied.

"So what's causing this? And what's this about them being bonded?"

Madam Pomfrey glared at the professor. "You haven't told them?"

His lack of answer was all the answer she needed.

"In the magical world sometimes it is useful for two people to share their magic, or their feelings. We do this by way of a bond. The simplest is the family bond, where a parent can cast various spells to protect her children and alert him or her if something is wrong with one of them. Apart from that the most common is the marriage bond, which in some cases can create a very powerful magical bond between a husband and wife. Apart from enabling them to share each other's feelings, it makes a family bond cast by either of them much much stronger."

"But what has this got to do with Hermione and Harry?" asked Mr. Granger.

"They have some kind of magical bond between them. When a bond is forming it can be dangerous to block it. The separation hasn't helped, but it is more than that. Something else is blocking the bond and we have to find out what it is, so we can treat it. In the meantime, the two children must not be separated for any major length of time. A



few hours is okay, even a day if it is just an odd day. But they need to spent most of their time together."

"Can they go to school?"

"Muggle day school?" the mediwitch asked.

"Yes."

"That shouldn't be a problem. But other than that they should be together."

"Hermione will have to come here with Harry," said Professor Dumbledore.

"Over my dead body," her father replied. "You may be a big shot in the wizarding world, but you'll have to kill me to take our daughter from us."

The professor sighed and nodded. "I will allow Harry to come to you. I'll cast whatever protective wards I can, but it may not be enough."

"It will have to be."

"But first, I want these two children in the hospital wing for a day or two. I want to observe them closely. And I'll need my potions."

"Madam Pomfrey They can't go to Hogwarts. Someone could see them."

"Headmaster. At the moment the hospital wing is empty. I suggest you hope it stays that way. To repair the damage to their bond and save their lives, I need every bit of magic on my side, and nowhere has more raw magical power than Hogwarts."

"You are right, of course. Mr. and Mrs. Granger. I wish I could take you to Hogwarts without anyone seeing, but it would be impossible."

"It will only be for a couple of days," Madam Pomfrey assured them.

"Very well," replied Mr. Granger, to his wife's surprise. He looked Madam Pomfrey in the eye and said, "We trust YOU."

Ignoring the slight he knew was in the other man's words, Professor Dumbledore helped Harry and Hermione into the floo.

They appeared directly in the Hospital wing and Madam Pomfrey insisted on them going straight to bed. She placed two beds next to each other and gave them each a potion and they were soon asleep.

When Professor Dumbledore had returned Hermione's parents to their home, he was about to leave when Mrs. Granger asked him. "What's all this about a bond?"

"Madam Pomfrey explained."

"No," Mr. Granger contradicted. "She explained about bonds in general, and told us what it isn't."

"I'm not sure you'd understand."

"Try us."

"I assume you want the two children told?"

"Harry is up to you, unfortunately, but we would want to tell Hermione, yes."

"Very well. When Harry and Hermione return, I will explain it to all of you together."

Before the Grangers could protest, the professor had gone.

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Madam Pomfrey kept Harry and Hermione sedated the whole time they were in Hogwarts, and she could tell that their magic was getting stronger again. As soon as she was satisfied it was safe, she took them through the floo, one at a time, to the Grangers' home.

After giving them another potion to send them off to sleep, they spoke to Hermione's parents. "They'll sleep now until the morning. I would advise no excitement for a few more days. I know Professor Dumbledore said he would come as soon as they returned, but it might be too much for them right now. A few more days, in a familiar, safe, environment, and I'll think about it."

"We understand."

"Don't be too hard on him. He means well even if he makes mistakes. He has more on his shoulders than you can possibly realise. Even his mistakes usually turn out for the best."

The Grangers nodded their understanding.

"I'll be back tomorrow morning to check on them. Goodnight for now."

The next day, already bored, Hermione had finally begun reading the strange old book on bonding.

She was shocked at some of the dark bonds, and even the blood bonds, designed to share defensive magic between friends, made her feel a little queasy.

Finally she came to the section headed, "Rare Bonds." It began with a couple of obviously dark bonds, the possession bond, and something called the Horcrux bond. It didn't go into much detail on either, but Hermione was shocked to learn that the latter required a murder.

She was relieved to turn the page to something much more pleasant...

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Over the next few days, Hermione insisted on spending all her time with Harry. Harry was different to the last time he'd stayed with the Grangers. He was withdrawn and sometimes even surly. Hermione had to admit, that if this was how Harry normally was, she wouldn't like him very much.

After a few days, both of them found their appetite finally returning, much to the relief of Hermione's parents and Madam Pomfrey. With his better appetite, Harry's mood also began to improve, though he still seemed wary of everyone.

Madam Pomfrey said they were ready for Professor Dumbledore to explain everything. She would ask him to call the next day, which was a Saturday, so both the Granger parents could be at home.

Having at least an idea how important the next day was going to be, Hermione asked her mother if they could go out for the rest of the day. Her father was working, but her mother, who normally worked part-time during the school term, had stayed home to look after them.

Soon they were driving out into the countryside, where they had a picnic tea. They still weren't sure what Harry's favourites were as he seemed to like anything he could get. Mrs. Granger suspected it would take a while before his attitude to food became that of a normal boy of his age.

After spending some time at a local playground, Mrs. Granger drove them to the town's new multiplex cinema, with no less than six screens, meaning six films to choose from.

Hermione was surprised to learn that it was the first time Harry had been to a cinema, though she told herself that she shouldn't have been surprised. The Dursleys had never let him do anything, it seemed.

Even though he didn't really have room after their picnic tea, Harry couldn't resist having some popcorn when Mrs. Granger offered to buy him some. "Can't go to the cinema and not have popcorn," she declared.

Hermione declined popcorn, saying she would help Harry with his. Sure enough, Harry couldn't finish it all.

Harry did manage a medium sized cup of fizzy orange while Hermione opted for a Cherryade instead.

Worried that he'd be sick, Mrs. Granger said "No ice cream" during the interval, much to Hermione's disappointment, but she promised to buy them one afterwards if they were hungry enough to eat it.

When they left the cinema, Mrs. Granger asked, "Anyone got room for an ice cream?"

"I've ALWAYS got room for ice-cream," Hermione told her mother.

Harry just said, "Yes, please."

"See. Harry's got manners," Mrs. Granger teased her daughter.

It was still early evening when they reached home, so the two children settled down to watch television until they were chased up to bed by Hermione's mother.

The importance of the next day was emphasised by Mr. Granger over breakfast. "Now, Hermione," he cautioned. "Let the man say what he has to say before you bombard him with questions."

Mrs. Granger laughed. They both knew Hermione only too well.

Madam Pomfrey came with Professor Dumbledore shortly after they had finished breakfast and when she examined them with her wand, she shook her head. "Something still isn't right," she said.

"Perhaps it's time for me to explain what we are talking about," Professor Dumbledore said. When they were all sat around the table, he began, "It's rather complicated, so please ask questions if you need to."

"It's quite simple really," Hermione said, contradicting the professor. "Harry and I have a Soul Bond and it's not working because Harry won't trust me. He won't trust anyone. And because of that it's going to kill us."

And leaving the others stunned faces around the table, Hermione burst into tears and ran from the room. Before they could react, they heard the front door slam shut.

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Author's note...

In most bond fics, the bond forms quite naturally and easily. But would it, in someone as emotionally damaged as Harry? I thought it at least made a different take on the soul bond.

Please review.

Brian

"Madam Pomfrey, I think it best if you stay with Harry," said Professor Dumbledore. "I'm going to the Ministry. In her state, she might exhibit some accidental magic, so we can find her."

"Do you think that's necessary?"

"No," he replied. "I don't. But I'm not taking any chances."

With that, he flooded away.

Harry stayed silent and Madam Pomfrey wasn't talking either. After just over an hour the Granger parents returned. "We can't find her anywhere. She normally goes to the library if she's upset but..."

They sat down, the worry showing on their faces. "She'll come back. She always does," Mr. Granger tried to reassure his wife.

"But I've never seen her look so..." she struggled for a word... "hopeless."

Mr. Granger turned to Madam Pomfrey and finally asked the question which Harry had been too scared to ask. "What's a soul bond?"

"I'm sure Professor Dumbledore could explain it better..."

"I'd like to hear it from you. Please?"

Madam Pomfrey nodded. "The easiest way to explain it is to explain the differences between this and a marriage bond." She hesitated. "But then you won't know about marriage bonds either, will you?"

"We've been married quite a while, you know."

"Sorry, I mean a magical marriage bond."

"No."

"When a witch and a wizard get married, part of the ceremony is to cast a spell to unite them. In reality, it does no such thing. It merely provides the potential. Those who choose to give themselves more fully to each other, and choose a closer level of unity, will develop what we call the marriage bond. In a sense it unites their magic, they will find that they are magically stronger when they are together,



especially if they are touching, than when they are apart. And it is not simply their power added together, but much more than that. Although no two bonds are alike, in general it seems to make them much less vulnerable to some dark potions and spells, not all unfortunately. Otherwise Harry's parents would still be alive."

"Harry's parents were bonded?"

"They had begun their marriage bond. As I said it takes a giving, and that takes time. A complete marriage bond will allow someone to feel the other person's feelings, sometimes even think their thoughts. The strongest bonds will even affect their life-span..."

"To make them live longer?"

"No, it isn't a fountain of youth. Even we can't live forever. What it does is to somehow, and we still don't really understand how, even out their life-span. We know that a witch from a family who are usually long lived, who marries and bonds with a wizard from a shorter-lived family, will end up living shorter, while her husband lives longer."

"Why would anyone want to live shorter?"

"They end up sharing their life-span, so both die around the same time, neither is left behind, barring accidents of course."

"So how does this affect Hermione, and Harry?" He added Harry's name almost as an afterthought and hoped that Harry hadn't noticed.

"They don't have a marriage bond. They have a soul bond. But it is similar to a marriage bond in the sense that it unites two people in a very similar way. It doesn't have to be between a witch and a wizard, it can be with both the same sex, although that is very rare, it has mainly happened in war-times and then it seems to be temporary, the bond dissolving when whatever crisis which caused brought it about is over. But normally a soul bond, like a marriage bond, is permanent."

"So they can share each other's thoughts?" Mrs. Granger asked, actually forgetting that Harry was in the room in her worry for her daughter.

"Not yet. I think they are starting to feel each other's feelings, hence the nightmares you've described Hermione having. I suspect they are almost identical to the nightmares Harry has."

"How did this happen?"

"We don't really know. Soul bonds are different from marriage bonds. A marriage bond is entered into deliberately, both parties choosing to do so. A soul bond seems to begin without that deliberate choice, sometimes, the two being brought together in unusual circumstances. For example, what made Hermione take you to where Harry would be? Sometimes it seems like the two halves of the bond call out to each other, even before they begin to form the bond."

"And is what Hermione said true?"

The mediwitch looked at Harry briefly, and replied. "If Hermione said it, then it's true. That is another difference between a marriage bond and a soul bond. A marriage bond's strength depends on the openness of the two involved. A soul bond doesn't. It is all or nothing. Like marriage bonds, soul bonds take years to form completely, but a fully formed soul bond is incredibly strong, possibly because it is usually only the most powerful wizards or witches that ever form a soul bond. A soul bond takes the magical energy from each one, to form the bond. If that doesn't work, which happens if one or the other is blocking it, it goes on trying, unstoppable, until the very life energy from each is drained away. That is what Hermione was talking about."

Harry sat miserably, knowing within himself that what Madam Pomfrey was saying was true. He knew they must be thinking the truth. It was all his fault, as usual. And this time, they were right.

"Harry," now Madam Pomfrey was speaking directly to him. "With your upbringing, I'm not surprised that you find it difficult to trust anyone. But I can tell you this, whatever one of you does affects the

other, and whatever you do to the other one, affects you. Hermione can never hurt you without hurting herself. She can no more betray you than you could cut off your right arm for the fun of it."

Harry got up. "I have to find her."

Mr. Granger got up to try to stop him, but Madam Pomfrey said, "Let him go. He's probably the only person who can find your daughter."

As Harry turned to close the front door, Mrs. Granger called him back. "You need your coat..."

"I don't care," he began

"And take one for Hermione please. If she's outside she must be freezing."

Harry nodded, and put on his coat, then took the other one Mrs. Granger handed him.

Mr. Granger had joined them in the hallway. "Harry," he said. "Don't blame yourself."

"Why not? It's my fault." Harry shut the door before Mr. Granger could reply.

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Harry walked quickly, almost running, having no idea where he was going, but knowing somehow which way to go. The rather foggy cold morning was turning to rain and he was glad of his coat. He hoped Hermione had some shelter. The thought of something happening to her because of him cut through him like a knife.

With the fog, he couldn't be sure where he was, but he was fairly sure that Hermione hadn't brought him this way before.

He was far out of town and beginning to feel hungry. How long had he been walking? He had no idea. He momentarily considered

turning back, but put that out of his mind straight away. He had no idea of the way home, and if he did, he couldn't leave Hermione out here alone. A bitter cramp in his gut was telling him that if he did, he'd never see her alive again.

He struggled on.

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Back at the Grangers' house, Mrs. Pomfrey had returned to Hogwarts, asking the Grangers to get Harry or Hermione to call her the moment either of them returned. Then another arrival through the floo had disturbed the day.

"Er. Hi. Er. Is this the Granger household?" The young man asked a startled Mrs. Granger.

"Yes."

"Who are you?" asked Mrs. Granger.

"Sorry. Professor Dumbledore sent me to do a report on the wards."

"Wards?" asked Mr. Granger.

"Sorry, I forget, you wouldn't know. Wards are the basis of the spells to protect against dark wizards."

"And you can do them? You don't look much more than a schoolboy."

"I can do some. But now I'm just doing the survey for the professor. He will do them. He can make the strongest wards. And I am a schoolboy."

Another floo arrival startled him. It was Madam Pomfrey. "Oh, you got here before me. Professor Dumbledore thought I'd better introduce you."

"Yes, the young man was just telling us how Professor Dumbledore is so concerned about our safety that he sent a schoolboy."

Madam Pomfrey seemed taken aback slightly at the hostility in Mr. Granger's tone. "I know that Professor Dumbledore has not made the best impression on you so far, but I can assure you that there is no better surveyor than this young man. Not only did he get outstanding on no less than twelve OWLs, but he has already been snapped up by Gringotts to train as a curse breaker as soon as he finishes his NEWTs. He is also head boy at Hogwarts, which itself is no small achievement."

"I'm sorry. I was just..."

"Worried. I understand. If it's any comfort, there's nobody better than Professor Dumbledore at defensive warding. He's the only person You Know Who was ever afraid of."

"You Know Who?"

"Er. A dark wizard."

"You mean Voldemort?"

The young man looked slightly surprised at him saying the name, but nodded. "Yes. I'm Bill Weasley by the way." He offered his hand.

Mr. Granger shook it. "Pleased to meet you."

"Likewise. And don't worry, the Professor told me this was all secret. Nobody will hear anything from me. Our family have always fought dark wizards. Mind you, if my sister knew I was helping with the wards for Harry Potter..."

"Your sister?"

"Sorry. Ginny's seven. Harry Potter is her favourite bed-time story."

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Harry was feeling tired. He was now walking alongside a canal. He'd seen it as the road he'd been following had crossed over it. Instead of walking down to the canal, he'd managed to slip. The muddy bank was soft enough that he didn't hurt himself, but he was covered in mud down one side. Worse still, he almost slid right into the canal itself. Only reaching out for a post had saved him and in doing so, Hermione's coat had fallen into the canal. He'd tried to fish it out using a branch, but the branch had snapped under the weight of the soaked coat.

At least the rain was lighter now, for a short time the steady light rain had turned to a downpour.

He canal was slowly turning and as he walked on he saw something on the bank. As he grew close enough to see through the remaining fog, he could see it was a lone figure sitting, her knees bent up, and her arms wrapped around them.

"Hermione!" he cried, running to her.

"Go 'way," she responded, then her curiosity got the better of her. "How did you find me."

"I don't know. I just knew where to come." Harry could see that Hermione was shivering violently with the cold. "You have to come home. You're freezing."

"Don't care."

Harry took off his coat and put it around Hermione. "Sorry, it's soaking. I did bring you one, but it fell in the canal."

Hermione just looked away from him.

"Hermione, please. Your Mum and Dad are worried." He began to pull her up. At first she resisted, then pushed herself up.

"Do you know the way home?"

Hermione shook her head. "I don't think so. We need to find a phone box."

"I haven't any money."

"I can reverse the charges."

"Oh. Can you do that?" He thought momentarily of Dudley and thought that he'd be doing that all the time when he got older, if he wasn't already.

Hermione was so cold she could barely stand. Harry pulled her against him to support her.

"Eew. You're all muddy."

"I fell. That's when I lost your coat."

They walked to the next bridge over the canal in silence. Luckily, this one had proper steps to climb. Even luckier, from the bridge, they could see a phone box.

Harry could hear Mrs. Granger crying with relief as Hermione spoke to her. She gave them the address printed inside the phone box. Her mother didn't know where it was, but said they'd find out.

As they waited for the Grangers to pick them up, Harry said, "I'm sorry."

Shortly afterwards, when he tried to apologise for losing Hermione's coat, his apology was brushed off with "It doesn't matter. You brought her back, that's all."

Although both children were hungry, especially Hermione, who, unlike Harry, wasn't used to going without food, Mrs. Granger insisted that they both have a warm bath before they do anything else. She took Hermione up first, while Mr. Granger made Harry a cup of tea.

As her mother bathed her, Hermione asked her, "I still don't understand. We were getting on so well. Why did Harry stop trusting me like that?"

"We asked Madam Pomfrey that. She thinks it might have happened anyway, a reaction to getting too close to someone, but also that being sent back to the Dursleys, he felt betrayed and unwanted."

"But he agreed to go back."

"Sometimes, darling, you can know something up here," she lightly touched her daughter's forehead, but still not feel it here." She touched her chest. "Come on, that's you done. We need to get Harry warmed up too."

[illegible]

The rest of the day was subdued. Madam Pomfrey returned to check over the two children, and pronounced them fit enough to stay at the Grangers' house. She suggested that, just to help the bond establish itself, they should share the same bed.

After a surprised gulp from Hermione, they'd agreed on that. So that night, after the children went to bed, Mrs. Granger crept up to check on them. To her surprise Hermione had her arm around Harry. She couldn't help a sob escaping.

Back downstairs, she cried to her husband, "I know he's a lovely boy and no child should have to live like he has. But with Voldemort and death eaters, and these wards they're having to do, and the bond, sometimes I just wish we'd never heard of Harry Potter."

The said Harry Potter, having heard Mrs. Grangers' sob, had got up to see what was wrong. Unfortunately, he only hear the last part. And he thought that they liked him! Feeling more unhappy than he had ever felt, he wished he could run away, but he was sure that that would kill Hermione.

Back in bed he lay awake, miserable, waiting for morning to come.



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Author's note...

IMPORTANT – To those who are worried, their sleeping together is NOT sexual and does NOT mean that you can expect them to be shagging at age 8 or anything like it.

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter ten.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

Harry has found Hermione and they have returned home, but after overhearing part of a conversation, he feels unwanted again.

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Hermione woke early. She was surprised to find Harry awake. "Hi," she said, feeling a little embarrassed at having him in her bed. He didn't answer her.

"Harry. Are you alright?"

"Yeah," he said, dejectedly. Hermione could tell by his tone that he was far from alright, but, having no idea what she could do, grabbed her clothes and went into the bathroom to get dressed.

Breakfast was an almost silent affair as as Harry was sombre and none of the Grangers had any idea why Harry seemed so down again. After breakfast he asked if he could floo Madam Pomfrey.

"Of course you can, you don't have to ask," Mrs. Granger replied.

When he called Madam Pomfrey, he immediately asked, "Could I come and talk to you about the bond?"

"Yes, of course. Hopefully, there will be nobody in the hospital wing this afternoon. Would that be alright?"

"Yes, thank you," he replied, hoping he'd hidden his disappointment at not being able to go straight away.

Several times during the morning a concerned Hermione tried to interest Harry in a book, a game, television, anything, but Harry just sat and brooded, miserably.

His plans to visit Hogwarts were changed after lunch by the sudden arrival of a woman he hadn't seen before. Hermione looked up and recognised her, however, and said, "It's Professor McGonagall isn't it?"

"Yes, dear. Now, Madam Pomfrey asked me to look in. Harry wanted to talk to her more about the bond, didn't you Harry?"

He nodded.

"I'm afraid the hospital wing is a little bit busy right now, so she asked me to come instead. Really, you'd be better talking with Professor Flitwick as a bond is a type of charm really, but hopefully I can answer your questions."

"It's just, I wanted to see her, sort of, on my own," said Harry hesitantly.

"Harry. You want to talk about the bond. That's affects both you and Hermione. Has Hermione done anything bad that she deserves to be kept in the dark about what you are asking?"

"No, it's just..."

"Yes?"

"It doesn't matter."

"Harry. It obviously matters very much to you. Please tell me what's on your mind and I promise it will go no further."

"I want to know if a bond can be broken without harming us."

Hermione gasped and looked hurt.

"May I ask why you want to know that? It's a very hurtful thing to ask."

"I don't mean it like that. It's just, if we didn't have a bond, Hermione would be safe and her mum and dad wouldn't have to worry and it would be a lot easier."

Hermione looked a little happier at his explanation.

Professor McGonagall smiled. "That's very thoughtful, Harry, but, no. Some types of bonds can be broken, the type of bond you two have is for forever. Even if one of you dies, the other would follow soon after."

Neither the professor nor Hermione could miss the disappointed look on Harry's face.

"Harry, you have something most of us only dream of, someone who will be part of you forever. If you really want to help Hermione, you need to make a choice to trust her and to stop pushing her away."

"Okay," Harry replied uncertainly.

"And you can start by telling me what's wrong today," Hermione said.

"I can't."

"Harry..."

"I just can't, okay?" He got up and left the room, not noticing Hermione slump to the floor.

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A hurried floo-call later and Madam Pomfrey was there in a couple of minutes. After briefly examining Hermione, she picked her up and took her to bed. Then she turned to see Harry, who had heard her arrival and come out of his room to see what was going on. "You haven't slept, have you? Hmm, you're burning up as well. Go to your bedroom. I'll be back in a minute."

A few minutes later she returned and ordered him, "Take this." The handed him a glass full of something green.

Harry sniffed it and pulled a face. "What is it?" he asked.

"Do you have to question everything?" she asked him. "I don't know what I'm going to do with you when you get to Hogwarts. It's a potion to make you sleep, similar to the one I gave you both when you were in the hospital at Hogwarts. You both need to recover your magical energy."

He shrugged and drank the potion. Fifteen seconds later, Madam Pomfrey was already easing his sleeping form down on the bed.

She then went to Hermione's room and quickly rennervated her. Before the girl could even focus her eyes properly, Madam Pomfrey had her drink a glassful of the potion as well. When both were asleep, she carried Hermione and laid her next to Harry.

She went downstairs and talked with Hermione's parents. "That potion should keep them peacefully asleep for about twenty four hours. But if this keeps up, I'll have to have them both at Hogwarts again, keeping them asleep if necessary, until they are stronger."

"Is there anything we can do?" Mrs. Granger desperately asked the two witches.

"Very little, I'm afraid," replied Madam Pomfrey. "Ultimately this is something they will have to work through between them."

Upstairs, Hermione was asleep, but far from peaceful. She woke up with a scream. For a moment she was disorientated, not sure where she was, then, recognising what was now Harry's room, she quickly got up and walked unsteadily towards the stairs. Her scream woke Harry, who got up and followed her.

"What was that?" said Mrs. Granger.

"I don't know," replied Madam Pomfrey, frowning. "That potion should have knocked them out totally." Mrs. Granger was already getting up,

so Madam Pomfrey put a hand on her arm and said, "Please, Mrs. Granger. Let me go to them."

As Mrs. Granger still looked uncertain what to do, Mr. Granger nodded and held onto his wife.

Madam Pomfrey met Hermione on the stairs. "That potion should have made you sleep for at least a day. Come on dear, come back to bed." She tried to take Hermione's arm but Hermione struggled free.

"Let me go," she said firmly. "I want to see my parents."

Something about the anger in the girl's voice made Madam Pomfrey allow her to pass.

"How could you?" Hermione screamed at her parents.

"What?" asked her startled mother.

"How could you tell him you didn't want him?"

"I... we didn't."

"We were dreaming it. I heard you, mother. You said you wished you'd never heard of him."

Madam Pomfrey laid a hand on Hermione's shoulder. "I'm sure it was just a dream..." she began.

"No," interrupted Mrs. Granger. "No, it wasn't," and she burst into tears.

"Harry," said Mr. Granger. "Don't stand in the hallway. Come in. Tell me, what did you hear last night?"

"Just that," snapped Hermione, sharply. "You didn't want him."

"Harry," Mr. Granger said gently. "Please try to understand. We were, we are, just so worried about losing Hermione. She is our only

daughter. And this bond has put her life in danger, and that's without worrying about Voldemort or his like."

"Harry," said Professor McGonagal. "When people are scared, they say things they don't mean. Have you ever wished Dudley dead?"

Harry nodded.

"Did you really want him to die?" There was no response from Harry. "What you really meant was you wanted him to stop hurting you, wasn't it?"

"Yes," Harry replied quietly.

"Hermione's parents just want her to be safe, that's all. That's all they meant by that."

"Harry, if you'd heard a minute before, you'd have heard Mrs. Granger saying what a nice boy you are."

Harry looked questioningly at Mrs. Granger, who nodded.

"Then why did you send me away?"

It was Mr. Granger who replied. "We believed it was the only way you could be safe. Otherwise, there is no way we would have let you go."

"Harry, I'm sorry I hurt you," said Mrs. Granger. "I never meant to." She walked across and gave him a hug. She wasn't surprised that he stiffened up as she hugged him.

The adrenalin from their sudden awakening was lessening and both children began to yawn.

"These two really need to get straight to bed before the potion takes effect again," said Madam Pomfrey.

"I'll put them to bed," volunteered Mrs. Granger, "if that's alright with you Harry."

He nodded.

Sending them to bed together, she tucked them in and bent down to kiss each of them goodnight, ignoring the fact that it was still only mid afternoon. She sat down to watch the pair as they quickly fell asleep.

Hermione seemed calmer, but Harry was still restless. She turned Hermione over and put her arm around Harry, who almost immediately began to breath more slowly and deeply. "Sleep tight," she told them, giving each of them another quick kiss.

When she got back downstairs, she found Professor McGonagall ready to leave. "I really ought to be getting back now. But don't hesitate to call me if there is anything I can do. I could get Professor Flitwick to visit if you like. He is the expert on bonds as it is related to charms, which he teaches. He would probably be the best person to explain everything to them about their bond."

"I don't think they are ready for that, yet," said Madam Pomfrey. "I think they need to work through this initial stage first, and learn to trust each other."

The Professor nodded. "You are probably right. It's just that if I am reading Hermione correctly," and the professor couldn't help a rueful grin as she said this, "she is going to want to know everything about the bond before too long."

"Our daughter," laughed Mr. Granger, "wants to know everything about everything."

"She is going to be a delight, and a challenge, to teach. I look forward to having her at Hogwarts in a few years."

"Well, actually," said Mrs. Granger. "We were thinking. Does she have to go to Hogwarts?"

"Not go to Hogwarts?" said a horrified Professor McGonagal. "But she'll need to learn to control her magic as she becomes older."

"Isn't there any other school she could go to?"



"Yes, there are other options. May I ask why you don't want Hermione to come to Hogwarts?"

"Professor Dumbledore," Mr. Granger replied bluntly. "We don't trust him. It seems to us that by his determination to send Harry back to those awful people, he came close to killing both Harry and Hermione."

"This would have happened anyway," Madam Pomfrey pointed out. "That boy has never had anyone to trust in his life. The separation brought it on more quickly, but it would still have happened."

"One thing you need to bear in mind," warned Professor McGonagal, "is that this is Harry Potter your daughter is bonded with. As you have correctly understood, that makes Hermione a target. Professor Dumbledore was the only wizard You Know Who, I mean, Voldemort, was afraid of. Most of us are too afraid to even say the name. Albus Dumbledore is the most powerful wizard alive and, like it or not, Harry and Hermione are going to need his protection"

Seeing the displeasure on the Grangers' faces, she added, "He isn't so bad, you know. Despite appearances, he cares very much for them. I won't go into details, but the Potters, Harry's parents, decided to trust one of their friends instead of Professor Dumbledore and it cost them their lives."

Mr. Granger nodded. "We will think about what you have to say."

After the Professor flooed away, Madam Pomfrey went upstairs with Mrs. Granger to check on the two children. They seemed restless.

"Should they be like this?"

Madam Pomfrey shook her head. "Whatever they are experiencing, it is intense. It may wake them up again, despite the power of the potion, and that isn't good. I have some calming potion in my bag. It will calm them enough to force them to stay asleep"

She quickly went downstairs for the potion and returned.

"Let me understand," said Mrs. Granger, slowly. "They are in a nightmare and you want to force them to stay in it?"

Madam Pomfrey winced. "That's not how I would put it, but yes. The energy needed to overcome the sleep potion is tremendous, and they are drained enough as it is. This will help."

"Then let me give it to them." The mediwitch handed a small bottle to Mrs. Granger. "How much?"

"Just a drop for each, that's it. I will leave the bottle here. I suggest you both take a drop tonight. You look exhausted. And now, I must go. I have patients waiting for me at Hogwarts."

With a brief goodbye to Mr. Granger, Madam Pomfrey flooded away.

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Author's note...

After a couple of angst-ridden cliff-hangers like that, I couldn't leave you waiting for the next chapter. I hope you enjoyed it. Interestingly, my reviewers seem divided between those who think the angst is more realistic and those who don't like it. I tend to write angst, I find it more interesting to write than where everyone is happy. Overcoming the difficulties and the sorrows seem to me to be far more challenging.

The repeated tragedies is, of course, a motif much used by JKR herself, with every book from book 4 onwards ending in a tragic death which Harry has to come to term with, Cedric, Sirius, Dumbledore, and many in book 7.

The angst also makes the happiness, when it does come, seem even happier, in my opinion anyway. So be warned, although there are happier times ahead, or the story would be maudlin, there is also a very tragic moment in the story not too far ahead.

My thanks to my new beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, for his work on this chapter, which included some significant improvements.

Thanks also to JamJackEvo for spotting a huge error in chapter 6, now corrected, for those who wish to re-download that chapter.

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter eleven.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

Harry asked if they could break the bond and Hermione confronted her parents about what they said about Harry. Harry and Hermione have been sedated to allow their magical energy to recover.

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Hermione was panicking. Her head hurt. She could vaguely remember hitting a wall. Her lip was sore too and she could taste the salty blood. It was pitch dark and she had no idea where she was. She was so tired, but felt like if she went to sleep, she'd never wake up again. The sudden thought that that might not be so bad shocked her.

Very slowly, her eyes became adjusted to the dark. This place. It was familiar and yet not familiar. She sat up and promptly banged her head again. The strange shape of the ceiling told her she was under some stairs. Why was she here? She found the door handle and tried to open it. It didn't budge. Why would her parents lock her in a cupboard?

She banged on the door, but there was no response. How long had she been in here? Not long judging by the fact that her lip was still bleeding a little. How long were they going to keep her here? After another futile session of banging on the door, she abandoned the attempt. She really was so tired. Her whole body ached. She could feel blisters on her hands. Sleep. She needed sleep.

"GET HARRY AND GET OUT!" The sudden shout awakened her. She was somewhere else, looking up at a ceiling. She heard the

crash of the front door. She didn't know how she knew it was the front door, but she did. A woman she didn't recognise was running towards her. Her face was ashen and she knew that something terrible was happening.

It was dark again as she awoke. She needed the toilet badly. She banged on the door yet again but there was still no reply other than a muffled shouted from somewhere else in the house to shut up if she knew what was good for her.

She couldn't wait any longer. She had to go. Even though she was alone, the embarrassment was worse than the smell, though that was bad enough to make her feel sick.

She was running, had to get away before they got her. Her chest hurt from the running, the sharp pain of a stitch in her side, but she'd got away this time. As she rounded the corner of the building, they were there again. They'd cut her off. She felt the pain of a punch in her stomach and promptly threw up. She earned her being pushed to the ground and kicked. A well aimed shoe hit her in the face and she knew no more.

The burn on her hand hurt terribly. "Finish my dinner, boy, or you'll get nothing for yourself." It wouldn't be the first time. But it was finished and she took the plates to the table. She went to sit down, but the food in front of her was removed. "Take this." A woman handed her some slices of bread.

"But I made..."

"YOU made? I bought all this," the man yelled. "Get back in your cupboard. Bread's good enough for freaks."

She ran to her cupboard before the boy next to her could volunteer to help take her back. The door slammed behind her and she heard bolts slide into place. The smell was unbearable and she lost interest in the bread. "FREAK!" she heard, followed by laughter.

"No! Not Harry! Please. Not HA..." The scream was silenced.

A face appeared above her. She'd never seen it before but she knew it was a cruel face. It smiled. And suddenly there was a green light and nothing more.

Someone was opening her mouth, something with a nasty taste. She was still shaking from the green light, but somehow it didn't seem so threatening any more.

For a few moments she was confused, but somehow she was in a park. It was deserted. This she recognised. It was the park where they had found Harry. There was nobody else around right now, so she was safe. She could sleep for a while.

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Madam Pomfrey had gone. Mrs. Granger had sat by her daughter for some time after the two children calmed down in their sleep. She heard a voice from the doorway.

"Come on, darling. They'll be okay."

"How can you be so calm?"

"I'm not. But I think Madam Pomfrey knows what she's doing."

"No child should have to go through this."

"No. But look at her now. Tell me. Have you ever seen Hermione looking so peaceful?"

"It's just the drugs she gave them."

"I'm not so sure. It was the same when Harry was here for a month before, It's the first time I've ever seen Hermione excited about anything apart from learning something."

Mrs. Granger allowed her husband to lead her downstairs. "How could I have said those awful things?" she asked.

"Like Professor McGonagall said, you were scared, that's all."

"Hermione looked like she hated me," his wife sobbed.

"She doesn't hate you. She'll understand. They both will."

"I hope so."

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This time the potion did as Madam Pomfrey intended. The two children slept, more or less peacefully, for over twenty four hours.

Mr. Granger was able to return to work as normal, while Mrs. Granger stayed home.

"Harry?" asked Hermione, when they finally woke up. "What's the green light?"

"What green light?"

"When the woman is screaming Not Harry."

"You saw?"

Hermione nodded.

"How?"

"I don't know. I think it's something to do with the bond."

Harry looked uncomfortable.

"You don't have to be embarrassed," Hermione assured him.

"You shouldn't have to see all that," Harry complained.

"Me? How dare they treat you like that?"

Harry was silent for a while. Then he said, "Voldemort."

"Huh?"

"The green light. I think it was when Voldemort tried to kill me."

"Oh, yes. Professor Dumbledore said that, didn't he?"

When they went downstairs, Mrs. Granger had then call Madam Pomfrey. "She wanted to check you over when you woke up."

Madam Pomfrey arrived half an hour later and cast her wand over the two children.

"It's better," she said. "The bond is a little stronger. I think I'll ask Albus if he can send Professor Flitwick tomorrow to be sure."

"Why don't you just call him direct?" asked Mr. Granger.

"To protect Harry and Hermione, only four of us know he is here," Madam Pomfrey replied a little sternly.

"Can I have some potion to give them tonight?" Mrs. Granger asked, quickly changing the subject.

"I'm afraid it's not a good idea to give it too often, but call me if you need me."

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To the great relief of both of Hermione's parents, the two children slept peacefully the following night. There had been some awkwardness at bedtime, as both felt embarrassed at sleeping in the same bed.

When Mrs. Granger told her that Madam Pomfrey had said that there was less chance of nightmares that way, or that they would probably at least be less intense, and it would only be necessary for a while, the children decided that they didn't object so much after all.



After putting the children to bed, Mr. And Mrs. Granger went downstairs. Mr Granger was laughing.

"What's so funny?"

"I don't know whether to laugh or cry."

"Why?"

"I just never imagined that I'd be encouraging our daughter to go to bed with someone."

"No," his wife couldn't resist a giggle.

"Especially not at eight years old," Mr. Granger finished.

"Nearly nine, thank you," said Mrs. Granger, in the best imitation of her daughter's voice she could manage.

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The next afternoon Professor Dumbledore flooed in with a tiny man beside him. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Granger. May I present Professor Filius Flitwick, our resident charms expert. I have brought him to answer any questions you may have on bonds."

Mrs. Granger looked openly suspicious, but went to get the two children, while Professors Dumbledore and Flitwick sat down. When Harry entered the room, Professor Flitwick nearly fell off of his seat in excitement.

"It's not? It can't be?" he almost squeaked. He looked across to Professor Dumbledore for confirmation.

"Yes, my old friend. This is Harry Potter and this is his bond-mate, Hermione Granger."

"Bond-mate?" asked Mrs. Granger.

"It is what we call partners linked by a bond," explained Professor Flitwick.

"As I explained to your mother," said Professor Dumbledore, "I have brought our resident expert on charms to answer your questions on bonds." He noted Hermione's suspicious look. "Before you ask it, you can trust Professor Flitwick. The staff at Hogwarts are selected for their expertise, not because they will say what I tell them to say, as I think you have seen with Madam Pomfrey. In fact, Filius here has just finished telling me what a fool I was to separate you both."

Professor Flitwick looked embarrassed. "I didn't quite put it that way. But you treated a soul bond as if it were simply a marriage bond and it isn't. It forms much more rapidly and is far more precarious in the early stages, though far stronger later. But only an expert on bonds would know that."

"In other words, I should have asked your advice," said Professor Dumbledore.

"Yes," the younger man agreed, "you should."

The older man nodded. "Professor Flitwick is being diplomatic as always. Madam Pomfrey and Professor McGonagall were far less restrained with their opinions on my actions regarding you both, especially for leaving you, Harry, so long without checking on you. Now, when Mr. Weasley arrives, please send him outside as I am going to teach him how to make the strongest protective wards possible. That will leave you in peace to ask whatever you wish to ask."

"I've made a list of questions," began Hermione, before Professor Dumbledore was even out of the room. Mrs. Granger smiled at that. In some ways her daughter was so predictable.

"Yes, my dear?"

"Why did we become bonded?" She quickly turned to Harry and added, "I don't mean I don't want to be, I just want to understand why."

Harry grinned. He hadn't taken her question the wrong way. In the month he'd spent with her, he'd learned all about her insatiable curiosity.

"Sadly, your first question I cannot answer," replied the professor. "Nobody knows. Soul bonds are too rare for any really meaningful research."

"Oh," replied Hermione, obviously disappointed.

"On the bright side," the professor pointed out, "it means you two have something incredibly rare and precious." He grinned, which looked slightly odd on him. "Next question?"

"What spell has a green light?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Harry dreams about it a lot. We know it has something to do with Voldemort killing his parents, but that's all."

Professor Flitwick had looked startled at the mention of Voldemort's name, but recovered quickly. "I'm not sure it's really my place to tell you, but it is the Avada Kedavra spell, the killing spell. It kills instantly and cannot be stopped. There is no defence or counter-curse."

"Then how...?"

"...Did Harry survive?"

Hermione nodded.

"Nobody really knows for sure. Professor Dumbledore believes that Harry's mother's sacrifice gave him a protection against Voldemort. But he knows much more about Old Magic than I do."

"Harry," said Hermione. "If it is instant, at least it means your parents didn't suffer."

Harry brightened visibly at the thought.

"Why do I seem to be able to share Harry's dreams, but not the other way round?"

"Interesting. Harry, you've been resisting the bond, haven't you?"

Before Harry could answer a young man appeared from the floo. "Hi. Sorry to interrupt." He looked over at Harry. "Professor Dumbledore wasn't joking. It really is Harry..."

Professor Flitwick coughed.

"Sorry, Professor. Pleased to meet you, Harry, and you must be Hermione. I'm Bill Weasley. And nice to see you again, Mrs. Granger. Don't worry, Harry, your secret's safe with me. He's outside, I assume?" Without waiting for a reply, Bill walked outside.

"One of my best students," said Professor Flitwick, "but always has time to help those who are less bright than himself. Nice family too. Hmm. Must have a word..." The professor seemed to be thinking to himself for a moment. "Anyhow. Before we were interrupted," he said, "I was asking you if you've been resisting the bond, wasn't I Harry? And have you?"

"I don't know, really."

"May I examine you?"

Nervously, not knowing what to expect, Harry nodded.

Professor Flitwick did as Madam Pomfrey had done, simply flicked his wand over both Harry and Hermione, but his examination took much longer. At the end of the examination, he was frowning. "I don't know anything about your upbringing, Harry, but at a guess I'd say it wasn't a happy one."

"They hated him, locked him in a cupboard a lot of the time and let their overgrown lump of a son beat him up," spat Mrs. Granger, with a venom she didn't know she had.

The professor looked shocked. "I... I had no idea. Don't they know who you are? You're a hero."

"No," said Harry. "I'm not. I don't even think I did anything."

"They wouldn't care anyway," Hermione added. "They hate magic and think we are all freaks."

"Harry, my examination tells me that your upbringing has left you with a real problem with trusting anyone..."

"I wonder why," interrupted Mrs. Granger.

"Quite. The problem is that a soul bond requires absolute trust. Anything less and gradually your whole magical and life energy, instead of feeding the bond, fights the bond, until it is drained away. As I know you already know, it is very dangerous."

"It would kill us," said Hermione simply.

The professor was more shocked by the calm way in which Hermione made the statement, than the statement itself.

"Yes," he admitted.

Hermione immediately saw Harry looking miserable. "Harry, it's not your fault."

"No, Harry," said the professor. "It certainly isn't. I wish I had known earlier. This does give me part of the answer to your question though, Hermione. But you, Hermione, have very strong mental control, not to mention an unusually high level of curiosity."

Mrs. Granger couldn't help a slight laugh at that.

Professor Flitwick smiled. "Ah, you'd noticed that, had you?"

"It's difficult not to."

"I imagine. Well, this means two things. Your mind, finding itself bonded, whenever you are relaxed enough, is exploring the bond. However your mental control is actually preventing Harry from doing the same if he wanted to. I would guess that you've been hurt a lot by friends you allowed close, am I right."

Hermione nodded. "So it's my fault, not Harry's?"

"I wouldn't say fault. And actually it is the way you are both reacting that is causing this. While your mind wants to explore, but also shuts itself off in case it is hurt, Harry's mind is so hurt that it doesn't even try to defend itself, and he lacks your curiosity, I'm guessing because being curious was not encouraged in his upbringing."

"He was told not to ask questions or he'd be locked in his cupboard," said Hermione, wondering how she knew that.

Deciding it was time he contributed to the conversation, Harry said, "If I got better marks than Dudley at school, I was punished for it."

"Then it is hardly surprising that Harry lacks the mental curiosity to explore your link."

"But what can we do about it?" asked Harry, sounding desperate.

"Oh, quite a lot," said the professor cheerfully. He looked at his watch. "Yes, we've plenty of time. Mrs. Granger, may I have your permission to take these two to Diagon Alley to get their wands."

"Wands?" squealed Hermione. "I thought we didn't get them until we are eleven."

"Normally you wouldn't. But for the training I have in mind, you will need them, if your mother doesn't mind."

Her mother shook her head.

"But Professor Dumbledore said that Harry couldn't go as he'd be recognised."

"Good point, let's see now." he seemed deep in thought for a moment and then waved his wand at Harry. "That should do it. It'll only last a short while, so we must hurry."

"What will last a short while?" asked Harry, unaware that anything had happened.

"Go and look at yourself in a mirror," instructed Hermione. "It's amazing. You've just got to teach me how to do that, Professor."

"All in good time. That comes much later."

Harry's voice in the bathroom could be heard throughout the house. "Wow!"

The professor had transformed his face enough to make him unrecognisable and changed his hair colour and style. He'd even made his scar invisible, something Harry had wanted to do every time someone at school had called him "scar face".

"Are we ready then?" asked the Professor, a little smugly.

"Yes," said Harry and Hermione together.

"Right, you know how to floo. Next stop, Diagon Alley."

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Author's note...

A catalogue of corrections. Thanks to Mike for spotting that the marriage spell mentioned in chapter 9 should have UNITED the couple, not UNTIED them. There were also minor errors in chapter three and six. Hermione and Harry met in early July, so Harry would have been seven, not eight, if Hermione was eight at that time (as stated in chapter one). We also know that Dudley is only a little older

than Harry, so he would have been eight, not nine as stated in chapter six.

More importantly, the timing of Harry's return to the Dursleys in chapter 6 and the events afterwards in chapters 7-10 would have taken the events in those chapters past Hermione's birthday, which is Monday the 19th of September. Many minor changes in wording were required to correct this.

All these errors have now been corrected, so, anyone who wants to download corrected chapters should now re-download chapters 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9 as well as the previous chapter to this one, chapter 10, as usual.

My thanks again to my new beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, for his work on this chapter.

Please review.

Brian



The Harmony bond, chapter twelve.

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To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

They have a bad night as Hermione dreams more of Harry's memories. Professor Flitwick has been called in to help Harry and Hermione. He is taking them to get their wands.

Quick author's note

Sorry for the delay, I injured my back slightly and sitting at a computer to write for long was very painful for a while. And pain isn't exactly a recipe to get the creative juices going.

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Hermione went first, quickly followed by a very nervous Harry. The professor followed Harry so quickly that they fell in a heap on the floor in the Leaky Cauldron, which attracted some of the attention the professor had hoped to avoid.

Leaving there quickly, the professor took them straight to Olivanders. Hermione, of course, had seen Diagon Alley before and couldn't help be slightly amused at Harry's shocked face as the bricks moved aside to let them in.

His initial shock turned to utter amazement when he saw the scene in Diagon Alley. He stopped outside a shop full of animals and couldn't take his eyes off of a tiny white owl.

"We use owls in the wizarding world to send messages to our friends," explained Professor Flitwick.

"Like the post office," said Hermione.

"Owls can be very loyal friends, but don't annoy them or they'll give you a nasty bite."

Seeing the longing in Harry's eyes, the first time she'd actually seen him seem to want anything very much, usually he just accepted what he was given, made Hermione say, "I'll buy it for you."

"There's no point," replied Harry, sadly. "I don't have any friends to send messages to."

That made up Hermione's mind for her at once. "Thanks," she replied sharply. "You've got me."

"I didn't mean... But I live with you, so I don't need an owl, unless..." He left the thought unsaid.

"Listen here, Harry," Hermione said, leaving no room for argument, "we are not sending you away again. They can't ever split us up again, do you hear? I'm buying you the owl. Soon you'll have lots of friends." She didn't know how they could make wizarding friends without them knowing who Harry was, but it didn't matter right at that moment.

Professor Flitwick smiled at the irony of Hermione's determination to find Harry friends, when, from what he had gathered so far, she didn't really have any friends of her own. Having an owl or other pet was the norm in the wizarding world, so he didn't think to remind Hermione that she should really ask her parents for permission to buy a pet before she did so. In any case, she had already disappeared into the shop.

She was out of the shop almost as quickly, carrying a birdcage which seemed very large compared to the tiny white owl it contained. "Well, it'll grow, so this'll save buying a new cage later," she explained.

From there it was a short walk to Olivander's, where they would buy their wands. The old man looked at Harry strangely, and even more

so when Professor Flitwick closed the door and locked it, ensuring that they wouldn't be disturbed.

"Aren't they a little young?" he asked the professor, ignoring the two children completely.

"Professor Dumbledore has asked me to give them some magical training," he replied. "I trust we can rely on your absolute discretion in the matter?"

Olivander looked insulted. "I have never divulged anything I have learned from a wand-choosing."

"I'm sorry. Of course not."

"We get to choose our own wand?" asked Hermione excitedly.

Olivander looked horrified at the thought. "Certainly not. Perish the thought. Your wand will choose you." He turned to the professor. "It would be quicker if you could remove the glamour."

Professor Flitwick nodded and in a second, Harry's appearance returned to normal.

"Glamour?" asked Hermione.

"That's what we call this disguise spell," explained the professor. "It's quite a simple spell really."

"Oh," replied Hermione, slightly surprised that she hadn't found that spell in the "Basic book of spells for witches and wizards".

Olivander raised an eyebrow slightly, but showed no other sign of surprise.

"I wasn't expecting you, Mr. Potter, for a few years yet." His tape measure seemed to leap out of his hand and began measuring all sorts of different measurements on Harry, and then on Hermione.

For the first time, Olivander showed some surprise. "They are bonded?" he asked the professor, who nodded. "Remarkable. Yes, remarkable." He turned to Harry and said, "Try this one." He handed him a wand. "No. This one then. No..."

This went on for some time and Harry was beginning to think that it had all been a mistake and perhaps he wasn't a wizard after all.

"Hmm. I wonder." He went to the back of the store and came back with a dusty box from which he took two wands. He handed one to Harry and immediately red sparks flew out of the end of it.

"Curious," he said. "Definitely curious."

"What is?" asked Harry.

"Phoenix feathers are quite common for wands, but this particular phoenix has only given three feathers. It gave just one feather many years ago, and suddenly gave two quite recently."

He handed the other wand to Hermione, and sure enough, a small fountain of red sparks came from it.

Olivander seemed satisfied. "That explains that," he said. "But the other curious thing is what happened to the first feather from that phoenix. You see, the first feather went into the wand which gave you that scar."

"Voldemort?" asked Hermione, seeming not to notice the man's wince at hearing the name.

"Yes. Now your wands both have a core from the same phoenix, but other than that, they are totally different. Your magic may have linked you, but that does not make you identical. Each of you is unique, just as each of my wands is unique," he said proudly. "One thing we can say though. I think we can expect great things from you both, just as the owner of the other wand did great things, terrible things, but great."

Sensing the conversation was abruptly at an end, Hermione handed over money for both their wands and they left the shop, but not before Professor Flitwick reapplied Harry's glamour.

Hermione wanted to show Harry around Diagon Alley, but the professor insisted that they return immediately. When they arrived home, he explained to Hermione, "a glamour is not a perfect disguise. A few people can actually see through it, though that is rare. More common is the ability to detect that there IS a glamour, and that would make people curious about why you were with someone wearing a glamour, and who it might be. We don't need stranger rumours about you going around."

Hermione didn't say anything, but nodded.

Harry could sense her frustration. Suddenly she turned to him and said angrily. "Harry, it's NOT your fault."

The professor smiled quietly to himself.

After some shock from Mrs. Granger about the idea of having an owl in the house, the professor assured her that wizards' owls need very little care, just their cages kept clean if they had to be locked in them for any time. They could usually hunt for themselves from quite an early age and could be allowed to come and go.

"But he still needs a name," Hermione pointed out.

Mrs. Granger insisted that they have some lunch before the professor commenced their training. Even the professor seemed quite pleased at the thought of lunch.

While lunch was cooking, Harry was flicking through one of Hermione's history books. "I want to name him after a famous wizard," he said.

Professor Flitwick smiled. "As he is actually a she, it might be better to find a famous witch instead."

Harry decided he liked the name Hedwig.

"Hmm," said Hermione. "As a muggleborn witch she helped poor magical children, and she also helped poor muggle children and gave all her money to the poor. She never received any recognition in magical circles because she was muggleborn, but a Pope made her a saint. There's even an order of nuns names after her which looks after orphans."

"Hello, Hedwig," said Harry to the tiny owl. "Are you going to look after me? Do you like that name?"

Hedwig tilted her head and looked into Harry's eyes. "Hedwig it is then," said professor Flitwick.

After Harry had taken Hedwig to his room, lunch was served. After they had eaten, when he led them out into the garden, Hermione immediately asked, "Won't the neighbours see?"

"No, they won't see anything," the professor began to reply as Hermione had another thought.

"And what about the Ministry. The books say that they detect underage magic. Won't we get into trouble?"

"The wards protecting this house do more than offer protection. They are charmed to ensure that muggles see nothing out of the ordinary. Many wizarding homes have wards for that. They also prevent the detection of any magic within them. That was mainly to protect your identity, but it also prevents problems with the Ministry."

He handed each of them a wand. "Hold it out." When they did so he waved his own wand over the two wands they were holding and muttered a spell under his breath. It sounded complicated.

"Now, we are ready. I am going to teach you what I fear will be one of the most useful spells you will ever learn. It isn't really my subject, but it's quite basic."

"Professor, what did you do to our wands?" asked Hermione. "Mine feels different."

"Professor McGonagall was right. You will be a delight to teach when you are older. Although the shield spell I am going to teach you is quite basic, it is far beyond the level you will be able to do at your age. Therefore I have charmed your wands to recognise the motion and the incantation 'Protego', and your wands will cast a very simple shield on their own. You won't actually be casting it yourself, but it will seem like you are."

"A shield spell?" asked Harry. "Like with swords?"

"Nothing so grand, I'm afraid. This will protect you against a few simply hexes, but nothing much more than that. Now watch my arm and wrist movement, do the same, and say clearly the word Protego."

Mrs. Granger had come out with them, but after ten minutes of watching them, she realised that she was making Hermione nervous and went back indoors.

It took both of them more than an hour to get it close enough that the wands reacted to their commands. To the professor's surprise, Harry actually got it first, just.

"Hermione," he said. "You are trying to follow me too precisely. The actions and the pronunciation are important, but the intent is more so. Relax a little and let it flow from you, by instinct."

A few rather frustrating minutes later, at least for Hermione, she managed to cast her first shield spell.

The professor didn't seem disappointed by how long they took. "Well done!" he cried happily.

His cry had brought Mrs. Granger out again. "I did it, Mum," cried Hermione, equally happily. "Harry managed it first, though," she added honestly.

The professor had them practice the shield spell for a little longer as Mrs. Granger watched, then he said, "Now, you need something to shield against. I am going to use a spell against you, and you have to

put up your shield in time to stop me. You needn't worry, it's only a very mild version of the stinging hex, a little like a wasp sting, except that it goes away much more quickly. Who wants to go first?"

"I think I will," said Mrs. Granger firmly, much to everyone's surprise. "I want to know exactly what you are using on the children."

"Fair enough," Professor Flitwick replied.

"Ow! Does it have to be that strong."

"The pain goes very quickly," the professor assured her, "but yes, for what I am trying to do, I think that strength is about right."

"And what are you trying to do?"

"Whatever I have to do to ensure that the bond becomes well established as quickly and safely as possible. You know the alternative," the usually jovial professor replied seriously. "I have to ask you to trust me."

"We'll be alright, Mum," Hermione said.

Her mother nodded, but walked indoors. Hermione thought she saw tears in her mother's eyes and almost ran after her.

"So who's first?" the professor asked again.

This time there were no volunteers. "Okay, as Harry got the shield spell first, he can go first this time. Hermione, you stay well clear. Ready, Harry?"

Harry nodded nervously.

"I'm going to cast the spell silently, as I don't want to teach you offensive spells at your age. So just watch my wand movement. I'll show you the movement first, without the spell, so you know what to look for."



In spite of knowing what to look for, Harry didn't get his shield up in time for the first one, and yelled "OW!" loud enough to bring Mrs. Granger running out again.

He assured her that he was okay. Mrs. Granger looked at Professor Flitwick suspiciously, then went back inside.

Hermione managed three shields before the professor's fourth stinging hex got through. "That's some wasp," she gasped.

Harry assured her that the pain went away very quickly, and a minute or so later it had.

They went on practising until each of them could defend against at least five hexes in a row, cast quickly, one after another.

"I think that's enough for today," said the professor. To his surprise, both children were disappointed at having to stop.

"Hmm. Maybe I can teach you something you can practice with on your own. Hold your wands out to me again."

Once again he cast some spell over them. "Now, the incantation for this spell is aguamenti. There is no wand flicking movement for this spell for reasons that will become obvious. Try it."

As before, neither of them could get it at first. Finally Hermione got it and a stream of water poured from her wand, almost hitting the professor.

Harry was still having no luck ten minutes later when the professor went indoors to go to the toilet. As he came back out he heard Hermione saying, "You're saying it wrong. It's aquaMENti, not menTI"

Harry threw down his wand and stormed inside and ran to his room. They heard the door slam.

"I was only trying to help," Hermione said.

"Hermione. How do you think Harry feels, that he can't do something, even though you seem to be able to do it easily?"

Remembering being second with the shield spell, she said, "Stupid, annoyed with himself."

"And how do you think he feels when you tell him he's doing it all wrong, when he's trying his hardest?"

"But I didn't mean it like that!"

"I know you didn't. But remember, he already feels stupid about it."

Hermione looked shamefaced.

"I do that at school," she admitted, for the first time wondering if it might be at least partly her own fault that she had no real friends.

"I better go and say I'm sorry," she said.

"A good idea. But I'm going now, don't worry, I'll be back tomorrow, I have a seventh year taking my afternoon classes. I can't come in the morning as I have a seventh year class in the morning. But before I go, there something I wanted to ask you."

"Ask me?"

"Yes. I noticed a strange look on your face when Mr. Olivander said about each of you being unique. Were you worried that the bond would make you lose your own identity?"

Hermione nodded uncomfortably.

"You have heard a soul bond compared to a marriage bond. Would you say your parents are both the same?"

"No. Sometimes they seem to think the same thing, or say the same thing at the same time, but they are very different."

"So you and Harry will be. You will share some closeness that most of us can only dream of, but you will always be Hermione and Harry will always be Harry."

Hermione smiled.

"Okay now?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Now, go and try to make things up with your bondmate. I'll see you tomorrow."

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Author's note...

Sadly, snowy owls are in greater danger than ever since JKR featured Hedwig in the Harry Potter books, due to many people buying them as pets, which they are not really suitable for, finding that they can't care for them properly and abandoning them. Owl sanctuaries in England are having a hard time coping with the numbers and the trend has spread across the Atlantic too. Sorry for the plug for animal sanctuaries but as I run one (for dogs not owls), I am interested. (I can't put a link here, but you can find it by typing three Ws and a dot followed by rescueddoggies then a dot and com into your browser.)

Not a correction to a chapter, but to my author's note in the last chapter. Dudley is, as both CatWriter and Nurray pointed out, only around a month older than Harry as they were both preparing to go to secondary school in the same September in book one, and Dudley's eleventh birthday encounter with the snake was probably roughly a month before Harry's eleventh birthday, though the date of Dudley's birthday is not made clear in canon.

And thanks also to omega13a for spotting a typo in the last chapter.

To anony – I'd reply to you properly but you didn't let me do so. No, your interpretation of my notes in chapter 10 is not correct. I'm also amused that you think I must be young as I'm a 46 year old widower who in the space of one month lost his wife, his business, a lovely home, and had some of the dogs my wife had given her life to save also die, in some cases horrible deaths. You are correct in one thing though, death is a story should be for plot reasons, or it becomes a bad soap opera where they add tragic event after tragic event to keep the viewers hooked.

And to Oliver – You are correct about the name for Casualty is more correctly A&E (Accident & Emergency), but this story is set in the late 1980s, and although the official name was changed to Accident & Emergency quite some years before then (when I was training as a nurse), most ordinary people used the word Casualty, in fact most still did when I left England in 2001.

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez. He suggested a number of important changes – obviously writing while still in pain let some serious errors through!

Please review, the story, not the notes g

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter thirteen.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

Harry and Hermione got their wands and had their first magic lesson.

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Hermione walked up the stairs and quietly knocked on Harry's door. When there was no reply, she opened it. Harry was on his bed, facing away from the door.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean it the way it sounded."

"It's okay," he replied. "I know I'm stupid."

"You're not stupid. I just find it really easy to learn things. It doesn't make everyone else stupid. It's okay if you don't like me any more," she finished and turned to leave the room.

"I still like you."

When she turned back to face him, he was surprised to see tears in her eyes.

"I didn't mean to make you cry."

"Most people don't like me," Hermione admitted.

"I think you're brilliant," Harry replied.

"One of my teachers said I am too bright for my own good."

"I didn't mean like that. I meant you're really nice."

"Thank you. Er... I can help you with that spell." Then she quickly added, "Only if you want to."

"I'm too tired," said Harry.

Hermione knew it wasn't only tiredness, but, looking at his face, he did look tired and she tried to keep the disappointment from her face.

Her attempt obviously wasn't successful as Harry looked at her and volunteered, "We could try tomorrow, before the professor comes."

"We'll have all morning. He can't come until the afternoon."

The two of them were quiet at supper and when Mrs. Granger asked them how their training had gone, even Hermione, who she had expected to delight in telling her every detail, only said, "Okay."

The evening was a quiet one. Harry watched the television most of the evening, something he still found exciting, having almost never been allowed to do so when he lived with the Dursleys until the Grangers had given him his own television. Hermione was re-reading her book of basic spells, wondering how many other spells she'd missed.

When it was Hermione's bedtime, she wondered if she was supposed to sleep with Harry again, but as he had gone to sleep without her, she decided to sleep in her own room.

The next morning at breakfast, Hermione's mother asked what they were going to do until the professor arrived in the afternoon.

"I'm going to help Harry with the aquamenti spell," Hermione replied.

Mrs. Granger noticed that Harry didn't look that enthusiastic and for a moment almost reminded her not to be too bossy. Then she decided this was something they were going to have to sort out on their own.

To the surprise of both Harry and Hermione, Harry managed the aquamenti spell after only a few minutes of trying.

Hermione had intended for them to take it in turns. First she would aim at Harry while he would cast the shield spell, then they would swap over.

But the first time they tried it something happened which Hermione didn't expect. As they faced each other, their wands drawn, Hermione cast her spell normally. But the moment Harry tried to cast his shield spell, instead of the shield appearing, the water from Hermione's wand simply stopped in mid air, falling to the ground, and a strange orange glow spread from one wand to the other. They both had a strange feeling like they were pushing against each other although they were some yards apart. The orange glow began to spread for a minute, then faded away.

"What happened?" asked Harry.

"I don't know." Feeling frustrated, Hermione tried her aquamenti spell again, this time against the wall. It worked perfectly, but when she tried against Harry, the moment he cast his shield, the same thing happened.

"For some reason we can't cast spells at each other. Maybe it's the bond," she mused, turning away and looking down at her wand.

While she was looking at her wand with a puzzled expression, Harry cast the aguamenti spell, soaking her with cold water.

After a shocked gasp as the cold water hit her, Hermione asked, "How did you do that?"

Harry shrugged his shoulders. "Like this," he said, with a grin. This time Hermione almost dodged the water, but not quite.

Harry was laughing so much that he didn't even notice when Hermione fired an aguamenti spell at him in retaliation, hitting in right in his open mouth.

Coughing, he fired right back, missing her. Then they both tried to cast at the same time and the strange orange line and glow appeared again.

"We'll have to ask Professor Flitwick about this," said Hermione as the glow dissipated again, while Harry took the opportunity to soak her again.

What Hermione had intended as a simple practice session quickly degenerated into a water fight, until the shrieking brought Mrs. Granger out to see what was going on.

"I thought you were practising your shields?" she asked.

"This was more fun," said Harry.

Hermione wanted to explain to her mother what had happened, but she wasn't sure how to put it.

Seeing the two laughing children, Mrs. Granger shook her head. "Come on, you'd better go and get those wet clothes off. It's almost lunchtime. When you've put on dry clothes, bring those down and I'll put them through the wash."

It was Harry who was ready first and he brought down their clothes. "I'm sorry I made more work for you," he said.

The expression on his face was somewhere between cheeky and guilty and Mrs. Granger couldn't help thinking that if Harry knew how sweet he looked in that moment, he'd never again doubt how loveable he was.

"Harry, it's no bother," she assured him. "And if you knew how happy I am to see you both playing happily, you wouldn't worry about a few wet clothes."

Hermione was quiet over lunch and Harry knew she was trying to understand what had happened.



Eventually, professor Flitwick arrived for their lesson. After a hurried greeting, Hermione launched into a description of what had happened. The professor looked surprised. "I don't know," he admitted. He went to the fireplace and called "Albus Dumbledore".

A minute or so later, Professor Dumbledore appeared from the fireplace. "Can you show me what happened, please?"

"I think we'd better do this outside," smiled Professor Flitwick. The others followed him outside.

"Now, one of you try to soak me," Professor Dumbledore ordered.

"Me!" cried Harry, then looked disappointed as a shield appeared around the professor without him even waving his wand or saying anything, stopping the water from hitting him.

"How did you do that?" asked Hermione.

"Magic," Professor Dumbledore replied, his eyes twinkling. "Now Harry. Can you soak Hermione?"

Again the water flowed from his wand. Professor Dumbledore seemingly extended his shield to protect Hermione and she remained dry.

Harry looked disappointed and Hermione stuck out her tongue at him.

"Now, can you both do what you were doing when the effect appeared?"

Hermione raised her wand and cried "aguamenti", while Harry cast the shield spell.

This time the orange line between their wands grew more quickly and expanded.

"Continue your spells," instructed Professor Dumbledore. "Don't lower your wands."

From each of their wands appeared shimmering faint images of water and their shields, which faded into nothing.

"Priori Incantatum," gasped Professor Dumbledore.

"Of course. I should have thought," cried Professor Flitwick. "That explains it. Their wands both have cores from the same Phoenix."

"Phoenix?" asked Professor Dumbledore, suddenly alert.

"Yes. Olivander said it was the same one who gave the core for You-Know-Who's wand," explained Professor Flitwick.

"His name is Voldemort, or Tom Riddle if you prefer," replied the older man.

"Tom Riddle?" asked Hermione.

"A story for another day," smiled Professor Dumbledore. "This could be very interesting."

"How?"

"It appears that Harry's mother's protection may have worked in a different way somehow, to cause you both to receive a wand which Voldemort cannot fight with using his own wand."

"But you said he was dead."

"No, just gone. We don't really know. But some of us are sure he will return."

"And you think he will come after Harry again?"

"I fear very much that that will be the case. But as your wands share related cores, it will at least make things more difficult for him."

"So I really don't have to go back to the Dursleys?" cried Harry, looking like he hardly dared to believe it.

Hermione looked shocked. "We told you..."

Professor Dumbledore, who was looking at Harry with a face of tremendous sadness, cut her off. "If I may use a muggle term to summarise the situation, I would rather believe that Harry has been 'waiting for the other shoe to drop.'"

Harry looked puzzled.

"You have been unable to believe that this time you won't be sent back again, am I right?"

Harry nodded.

"Harry, I promise you. I will never force you to go back to the Dursleys, nor will I allow anyone else to do so. Do you believe me?"

Harry looked into Professor Dumbledore's face for a minute. Finally he nodded, and ran from the room.

Hermione went to follow him, but Professor Dumbledore held her back. "He will be embarrassed if you see him now."

Hermione nodded sadly.

"While we are waiting for Harry to come back to us, perhaps you could arrange a nice cup of tea?"

"Yes, Professor."

They found Mrs. Granger in the kitchen. "Ah, Mrs. Granger. Harry was a little upset."

"What have you done?" she snapped.

"I told him that I would never force him to go back to the Dursleys," explained the Professor. "Hermione wanted to comfort him, but just this once, I think he might feel more comfortable with you."

Looking slightly shocked, Mrs. Granger left the kitchen silently.

Watching her go, Professor Dumbledore sighed sadly and couldn't help but notice that he didn't really feel much like having that cup of tea any more.

As she walked up the stairs, Mrs Granger also gave a sigh, wondering how much healing was needed in the soul of her de-facto adopted son.

She knocked on his door. "Harry? May I come in?"

There was no answer, so she walked in. Harry was on the bed. He sat up and she could see his tear-stained face.

"I'm being silly," he said.

"No, Harry. I can think of other words to describe you, brave, loving, kind, but silly would not be one of them."

"But I'm crying over nothing."

"Harry, since you arrived, you've been terrified we'd send you back again, am I right?"

He didn't answer.

"And I know, what I said, didn't help."

He still remained quiet.

"When we've worried about something, when that worry is taken away, sometimes we just have to let it all out. Don't be ashamed of that."

She sat on the bed beside him and pulled the still-crying boy into her arms. After a minute or so, she said, "Harry, look at me, you're making me cry now. Harry, I want to tell you something. Nothing will ever make us send you away, nothing. Do you understand me?"

"Really?"

"Really." At the look of hope on his face, she grinned a little. "Apart from anything else, can you imagine the lectures we'd get from Hermione if we did?"

Harry giggled.

"Are we alright now?" she asked.

Harry nodded.

"Good." She gave his arm a squeeze. "I'm sorry I hurt you."

"It's okay. You were scared."

"Yes, I was," she admitted, "but it wasn't okay. Now, shall we go to the bathroom and get both our faces cleaned up before we rejoin the others?"

He nodded.

Harry was still a little embarrassed when he walked back downstairs to face the professors and Hermione.

"Hello, Harry," said Professor Dumbledore.

"Sorry, I..."

"There is no need to explain, Harry. You have suffered as no child should have to, and I must bear some of the responsibility. Tell me, what do you know about your parents?"

"Only what you told me."

"The Dursleys didn't tell you anything?"

"They said they were lazy drunks and killed in a car crash."

Hermione looked shocked.

"Your parents were not drunks, and far from being lazy. They were head boy and head girl at Hogwarts. I have something for you."

He reached deep into his bag, far deeper than seemed possible for the size of the bag. He finally pulled out a frame containing a photo.

"They're moving!" cried Hermione

"Are these my parents?" asked Harry.

"Yes, Harry. These are James and Lily. And yes, Hermione, wizarding photos move."

"You look just like your father," said Hermione.

"But his mother's eyes, I think," said Mrs. Granger.

"I like her eyes," said Hermione, then went rather red. "I mean..."

Her mother just smiled knowingly.

Deciding to change the subject rapidly, Hermione asked, "Professor. What's Prior Incanta?"

"Priori Incantatum," corrected Professor Dumbledore. "Two wands which share a core from the same magical animal can never duel each other. If they try, you saw the effect. In fact they will begin to replay their previous spells. In your case, apart from aguamenti and your shield charm, there were no previous spells."

"How does this protect Harry?"

"It provides some protection for both of you, not just Harry. If Voldemort attacks you and you defend yourselves with your wands, allowing the wands to connect, he will have great difficulty in harming you. It is not a perfect protection by any means, but if he is not expecting it, it may delay an attack. There is a problem though."

"What's that?"

"You won't be able to practice duelling with each other."

"Actually I wasn't intending them to do that," explained Professor Flitwick. That was just to get them used to handling a wand."

"Good. Then, if I am not needed any longer, I will leave you in Professor Flitwick's capable hands. Sadly, even in the magical world, paperwork doesn't do itself."

"Thank you for coming," said Hermione, surprising the professor.

"You are always welcome. And now, goodbye." He walked into the lounge and disappeared into the fireplace.

"Are you both ready for your lesson?" asked Professor Flitwick.

The two children both cried "Yes" together.

"Such enthusiasm. We'll need some space, so shall we go outside again."

When they reached the back garden, he said, "Hermione, would you hand me your wand please, and stand by the wall, that's right."

Both children looked puzzled.

"Now, Harry. I am going to use the stinging charm against Hermione."

"Don't you mean me?"

"No."

"But she hasn't got her wand!"

"No, she hasn't, but you have yours. Your job is to prevent me from stinging her by casting your shield."

Harry walked in front of Hermione.

"No, Harry, not directly in front of her. It is your shield that is going to protect her, not your body. Ready?"

Harry looked tense as he got into the stance they had practised.

Over the next ten minutes Professor Flitwick sent what must have been over a hundred stinging charms at Hermione. He moved around the garden, forcing Harry to move to protect Hermione.

"You're good, Harry. Not one got through. Now it's your turn, Hermione."

He took Harry's wand and gave Hermione's wand back to her. "Ready?"

Hermione nodded, concentration etched on her face.

After five minutes, the professor realised that he wasn't going to get anything past Hermione either. "Let's make it a little more difficult," he said. "I will aim at Harry or at you, and you have to see where I am aiming before casting your shield."

A couple of minutes later, he managed to hit Hermione. "Ow!" she cried, "that's stronger than before."

"Are you alright?" asked Harry.

A tearful Hermione nodded. "I'm okay. It's not THAT bad."

"Shall we continue?" asked the Professor.

Hermione's answer was to get into her defensive stance again.

A minute later the professor cried, "Expelliarmus," and Hermione's wand went flying from her hand.

A few seconds later the professor pointed his wand at Harry again, to sting him.



Hermione cried out "No!" and threw herself between them and the stinging spell hit her before they could move again.

An angry Harry almost threw himself at the professor, who simply stepped aside and muttered another spell over Hermione.

"It's alright," said Hermione. "The pain's gone."

"Why did you do that?" asked Harry.

"It wasn't fair," complained Hermione.

"I'll leave you to think about that until tomorrow," the professor said and walked inside the house.

"Are you really alright?" Harry asked Hermione.

"Yes. I can't believe I was so silly. I almost began to trust him."

"You shouldn't have taken the sting. I might have dodged it," Harry said.

"It was too quick."

"It looked like it really hurt."

"It did, but not once he took the pain away."

Inside the house, the professor was talking to Mrs. Granger. "I think I may have helped Harry begin to trust Hermione, but at the expense of their trust in me."

"How's that?"

"I'm sure they will tell you all about it. I will see you all tomorrow afternoon, if they still want me teaching them."

To Mrs. Granger's surprise, neither of the children mentioned what had happened and they had a quiet evening in front of the television. She was pleased to see that they had drifted together in the armchair

closest to the television. They had pulled it too close to the television and normally Mrs. Granger or her husband would have commented about it not being good for their eyes, but seeing them close together like that, neither of them had the heart to disturb them.

Once again, Harry went to bed earlier than Hermione as his body, still quite frail from poor feeding for so long, meant that he couldn't keep going for as long as Hermione could.

Alone with her mother, Hermione said quietly, "I don't think I want more lessons with Professor Flitwick."

"Why's that?"

"He tried to hurt Harry."

"Really? And what happened?"

"I got in the way. It really hurt as well."

To her surprise, her mother smiled.

"It's not funny," Hermione cried, really annoyed at her mother.

"No, it's not. Hermione, darling. Is what you told us the other night true?"

"What about?"

"About Harry's lack of trust killing you both?"

"You know it is." Hermione sounded hurt.

"I know, darling. How do you think this afternoon affected that?"

After a few moments' thought, Hermione shook her head.

"Harry saw you let yourself get hurt rather than let him be hurt."

Hermione's face lit up. "I think he might trust me a bit more now. At least I hope so."

"I think that is what Professor Flitwick is hoping to achieve, at least, judging by seeing you two together in the armchair this evening."

Hermione blushed like a tomato, then said, "I think I'll go up to bed now."

Her mother smiled. "I'm happy for you, darling, honestly."

This time, Hermione chose to sleep with Harry, whether he would know it or not. When she got into bed, she put her arm around Harry. Although he tensed up for a second, after that he relaxed and let her hold him.

Hermione smiled. "Thank you, Professor," she said in her mind.

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Author's note...

Thanks to canoncansodoff for reminding me about the Priori Incantatum effect, so I could rewrite the water fight scene BEFORE anyone read it rather than, embarrassingly, after I'd published it.

And thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

Please review,

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter fourteen.

Author's note...

IMPORTANT – To those who are worried by the last few part of this chapter, please read the author's note at the end before jumping down my throat!

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

Water fights, problems with wands and Hermione got stung protecting Harry. Professor Flitwick's training has begun to have an effect.

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Hermione woke first and was pleasantly surprised to find Harry's arm around her. She lay there for a while wondering if she dare try to reach out to him with her mind like she had read about in the book on bonding. Reluctantly she decided against the idea. It might wake him up, and he might not be very happy at her trying to get into his mind while he was asleep.

After a short while, she carefully moved his arm. He didn't stir, so she quietly got out of bed and went back to her room to get her clothes, then went to wash and change.

When she got downstairs, her father was sitting at the breakfast table reading the newspaper. "Hi, Dad."

"Hi, darling. How's it going with Harry?"

She loved the way her father did that. No nonsense. Straight to the point. Her mother would have been more vague, more careful not to risk offending or upsetting her.

"Good, I think," she replied. "He seems more relaxed with me now."

"And how about you with him?"

Hermione hesitated. "It's hard. I like him, but I'm scared to like him. What if he gets bored with me like all my other friends?"

"Well, he can't just leave you, can he?"

"No," she admitted. "But what if he wishes he could? What if he only likes me because he has to? Or he doesn't like me, but he has to pretend to because of the bond?"

"Sometimes, Hermione, you're not very observant. You only have to look at him to know that he thinks that the sun shines out of your..."

A loud cough from behind made him stop in mid phrase.

"Hi, Mum. We were just talking..."

"I heard. While I would certainly NOT express it quite the same way as your father," and the look her mother gave her father at that moment made her realise that they would be having a "talk" later, "what he means is true. Harry adores you. You can see it in his eyes."

"But that's because I was just the first person to try being nice to him. What about when he doesn't feel like that any more?"

"Why are you so worried about something that isn't going to happen?"

"She's just worried Harry will be like all her old school friends," her father explained.

"Talking about school, how long have I got to stay off school?" Hermione asked.

Her mother smiled, spotting easily the attempt to change the subject. "I don't know. They wanted you to be together as much as possible to repair the bond."

"I can't believe I've missed so much school and didn't even think about it," Hermione commented.

"You've had a lot on your mind," her father pointed out. "How about we wait till the weekend, then ask Madam Pomfrey what she thinks? Maybe you can start back next week and take Harry with you."

"Talking of next week," her mother smiled, "Monday is your birthday."

"I'd forgotten."

"Good job we haven't. What would you like for your birthday?"

"To start back at school?" asked Hermione.

Her father rolled his eyes. "You've got to be the only child in England who wants to go back to school for her birthday present." Then he added, "I wonder when Harry's birthday is."

"I'll ask him." She got up to go upstairs.

"Not now," her mother warned. "He's sleeping. Don't wake him up for that. When I think how those... people made him get up early to do everything for them..."

Hermione knew her mother had had to struggle not to use a word she would have told her father off for using and she would have been amused but for the feeling of sadness about how Harry had lived all those years.

"I bet he's never even HAD a birthday present," Hermione said, sadly.

They'd actually finished breakfast when Harry came downstairs. "I'm sorry I slept too long," he said, guiltily.

"Harry," Mr. Granger said firmly. "If you need to be up by a certain time, we will tell you, and we will wake you up if need be. If not, you can sleep as long as you need to, okay?"

"What would you like for breakfast?" Mrs. Granger asked.

"I'm okay," he began. "I'm not really hungry." Then he caught Hermione's eye on him and he knew she was telling him to let them care for him. "Some cereal, please?"

"Harry," said Mr. Granger when Harry had eaten half his bowl of cereal. "Hermione is nine on Monday. Before you came down we were wondering when your birthday is."

"July 31st," he replied.

"But you were with us, here, then," Hermione cried. "Why didn't you say anything?"

"I didn't... I don't know," Harry finished miserably.

Hermione got up and left the room and ran upstairs. Even after she slammed her bedroom door, they could hear her crying.

Harry looked as uncomfortable as he felt. "What did I do wrong?" he pleaded.

"Nothing Harry," Mrs. Granger assured him. "When you love someone, you hurt when they are hurt. She's just upset that you felt so unwanted for so long that you didn't think that we might want to celebrate your birthday."

"Nobody has before," he said.

"I know, Harry. And that's why she's so sad right now."

Harry looked so guilty that Mrs. Granger was forced to say, "It isn't your fault, Harry. If anybody's, it's the fault of those horrible relatives of yours."

It was quite some time later, almost time for the professor to arrive, that Hermione came back downstairs. Mr. Granger had gone to work. "Mum, if we're allowed to go back to school next week, can we start on Tuesday?"

"Of course, dear. Why?"

"Would it be okay if we treated Monday as Harry's birthday too?"

Mrs. Granger smiled. Harry just looked stunned. He wanted to talk to Hermione, but even he had worked out that he would only end up upsetting her if he did that.

"You'll both have to decide what you really would like to do on your birthday then," said Mrs. Granger as the floo flared into life.

Harry was surprised as Hermione went straight up to the professor and smiled, "Thank you, professor."

"I didn't think you'd want to see me again, but Professor McGonagall said that it wouldn't take you long to work it out," he laughed.

"I didn't really," Hermione admitted. "Mum told me."

"I take it that you haven't shared the information?" the professor asked, nodding pointedly at Harry, whose expression was somewhere between a scowl and puzzled.

"Harry, it's okay."

"But he hurt you," Harry protested.

"Mum made me see. He only did it to help you trust me."

Harry looked frustrated.



"I didn't see it either till she explained. The professor knew I'd try to protect you when he was going to sting you that time."

"So?" Harry still sounded sullen.

"Harry, may I explain?"

Harry nodded, but his reluctance was obvious.

"Even though she didn't know what I was doing, Hermione deliberately let herself get hurt instead of you. Deep inside you know that means she cares about you enough to do that. It is just a step to building the trust between you."

"And it worked Harry. You let me hold you last night and I've never seen you so relaxed." She didn't mention that he'd been holding her when she woke up.

"But I don't want him hurting you because of me," Harry protested.

"Harry. This isn't just for you," the professor pointed out. "This is for both of you."

"I don't want you hurting Hermione any more," Harry insisted.

"Harry, I don't want to hurt either of you. But I will do whatever is best for both of you long term."

Harry nodded, but his reluctance was obvious.

The Professor started as he had before, but, to the children's surprise, instead of the stinging hex coming from his wand, there was a jet of water, rather more powerful than the water they had been able to produce.

After they'd successfully protected each other for a while, it was Harry's turn to be wandless again and this time Hermione lowered her wand. Harry was soaked in seconds and looked at her, startled.

"That's for getting me when I wasn't expecting it yesterday," she grinned.

"Wait till it's your turn," Harry threatened jokingly.

The professor waved his wand silently and Harry found himself dry.

"How did you do that?" Hermione asked.

Professor Flitwick smiled. "To quote Professor Dumbledore, that's magic. Perhaps we'd better find another way to practice."

"I'd guessed that much," Hermione replied, "but don't worry, I won't soak him again."

The look on Harry's face told the professor that Harry wasn't thinking the same. It reminded the old professor of another Potter, years before, planning mischief.

"All the same," he said, smiling, "I think I've probably done all I can right now. It's just as well as Madam Pomfrey is coming to see you both shortly. Now, I have a busy day tomorrow, so I will see you Saturday."

As he left, Hermione turned to Harry and said, "Sorry, I didn't mean to spoil it."

"I'll get you next time," was his only reply.

"You can try," Hermione retorted.

Harry picked up his wand from where the professor had left it and Hermione ran inside as Harry chased her.

"Whoa!" said her mother as Hermione crashed into her, almost knocking her off balance. "What do we say about running in the house? You could hurt someone." To Hermione, she sounded a little cross, but not really.

"Sorry, Mum," she said.

Then they both noticed a terrified look on Harry's face. Mrs. Granger bent down to him and he flinched, "Harry. It's okay. I'm not going to hurt you, or Hermione."

"Sorry, Mrs. Granger," he said, still obviously nervous.

Deciding that it was probably better to say nothing further on that subject, Mrs. Granger said, "I was just coming out to get you as Madam Pomfrey is here to see you both."

Both children were obviously pleased to see Madam Pomfrey. "Just sit down and make yourselves comfortable," she told them and was pleasantly surprised to see that they both sat on the sofa together.

"Hmm," she said, as patterns of light appeared in front of her as she waved her wand over the two children. "Hmm," she repeated.

"Well?" asked Hermione, impatiently.

Her mother, still standing in the doorway, looked almost as impatient to hear the result as her daughter.

"Better than before," the mediwitch replied non-committally.

"Does that mean I'm not going to kill Hermione now?" asked Harry, a guilty tone in his voice.

Both Madam Pomfrey and Hermione looked sharply at him. "Harry, this isn't your fault," they both said, Madam Pomfrey softly and Hermione rather more forcefully.

Harry looked down. Mrs. Granger walked over to him and putting her hand under his chin, she lifted his face. "Harry. You've known nothing but abuse all your life. You need to give yourself time."

"But Hermione..."

"Will be fine," said Madam Pomfrey in a brisk, businesslike manner. "As will you, if you both continue to do as I say. Mrs. Granger, may I have a word?"

"Can't you say it in front of Hermione and Harry?"

Madam Pomfrey smiled. "It's not that. I just want to ask you something."

The two women went out of the room for a few minutes and then returned.

"I understand you have been sleeping together. Any more bad dreams?"

"No," said Hermione.

"And how's it going? Sleeping together, I mean."

Hermione blushed a little. Harry just looked puzzled and said, "Okay, I guess."

"Good. From now on, I want you to sleep together without your pyjamas."

Hermione gasped and squealed, "Naked?"

"No, you can wear underwear, but nothing more."

Seeing her daughter was still embarrassed at the thought, Mrs. Granger said, "it's no different to being at the beach in your swimsuit."

"Why?" Hermione asked.

"Skin to skin contact, the physical closeness, will help the bond."

Hermione still look worried. She noticed her mother didn't look entirely happy either.

"How long is this for?" Mrs. Granger asked suddenly. "I mean, as they grow older..."

Madam Pomfrey smiled. "Don't worry. It's only to help the bond become established, no longer than that."

Madam Pomfrey had gone and both children were still sitting where they had been. Hermione was nervous about that night. Harry was nervous that somehow he'd upset Hermione again.

Suddenly Hermione leapt up and ran to the television. "It's ten past five!" she cried. "I keep forgetting it."

"What?"

"Blue Peter."

Her answer meant nothing to Harry, but he watched the programme anyway, thinking it was more interesting than the rubbish Dudley usually watched.

Mr. Granger was home earlier that evening than he had been all week, and so he got out a board game for them all to play. It was a version of ludo called frustration, and after losing a few times, Harry could see why.

As bedtime approached, Hermione seemed obviously more nervous.

Trying to lighten the atmosphere, Mr. Granger said, "So, Hermione, what's this I hear about you doing a strip-tease for Harry?"

Hermione giggled slightly. "Da-ad. I'm not."

"Come on," said Mrs. Granger. "Let's find you something to wear."

But as Mrs. Granger and Hermione went to leave the room, Harry asked, "What's a strip-tease?"

Mr. Granger looked at his wife, who laughed. "Oh, no. You started it, David. Now you can explain it." She stood in the doorway, waiting.

"I thought you were going upstairs, Jean," Mr. Granger said irritably.

"Oh, no," she replied. "I want to hear this."

Mr. Granger sighed. "Well, Harry. A strip-tease is when a woman takes off her clothes for a man." Harry looked puzzled. "She does it slowly, to excite the man."

"Why would he want her to do that?" Harry asked innocently.

Mr. Granger laughed and ruffled Harry's hair. "Just you keep thinking like that, Harry, and we're gonna get along fine."

Taking pity on him, Mrs. Granger explained, "It's something you'll really only understand when you get older."

"Oh. Okay."

After they'd each bathed and got into bed, Harry and Hermione were obviously both uncomfortable, laying as far from each other as possible in the bed.

"I think the idea was more contact," Mrs. Granger reminded them.

"You turn that way," Hermione told Harry.

Harry turned onto his side facing away from her and Hermione moved close to him and put her arm around him.

"You okay?" she asked him.

"Yeah. Are you?"

"Yeah."

Neither of them had expected to be able to get to sleep quickly, but they were already asleep and were unaware of Hermione's parents when they peered in to see them.

Not sure what she was feeling, Mrs. Granger squeezed her husband's hand and they went back downstairs.

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Author's note...

IMPORTANT – To those who are worried, their sleeping together in underwear is NOT sexual and does NOT mean that you can expect them to be shagging at age 8 or anything like it.

Sorry for the delay, Real Life keeps getting in the way.

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

Please review,

Brian

# The Harmony bond, chapter fifteen.

### Disclaimer:-

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In the previous chapter...

Hermione had a talk with her dad.

[illegible]

Hermione woke up sweating, the sound of screams still ringing in her head. She sat up suddenly, and tried to calm her breathing. She reached over to turn on her bedside light.

The sudden movement and the light had woken Harry. Seeing the still-terrified look on her face, he asked her, "Are you okay?"

At first she nodded, then said, "yes. I think the er..." she struggled for a word she felt comfortable with... "closer contact made me dream your dreams again."

"Oh. Sorry."

"Never mind that, Harry," she said, dismissing his apologies. She then scooted closer to him and, holding him, whispered "Do you have nightmares like that all the time?"

"A lot. Perhaps we should try to dream your dreams?" Harry felt Hermione tense. "Only if you want to."

"Okay, I'll concentrate on opening my mind as we go to sleep, and you concentrate on getting into my mind."

Harry nodded. Hermione turned off the light, then pressed herself against Harry's back. Quickly enough, they fell asleep again.



When they awoke again a few hours later, they knew they had failed. Harry's nightmares had disturbed them both again.

Mrs. Granger had to go shopping, so they went with her. She had taken one look at the tired faces of the two children and decided that she would make their "day off" from training a relaxing one.

When she asked them where they'd like to have lunch, Hermione insisted that Harry choose. He chose McDonald's, and if neither Hermione nor her mother were impressed with the food, they couldn't resist occasional happy glances at each other as they saw the delight on Harry's face.

Harry told them excitedly that it was his first time inside a McDonald's. When pressed by Mrs. Granger, he explained that he had only been to a McDonald's once before and he'd been told to wait in the car while Dudley and his parents went inside. When they had come out, they had given him Petunia's and Dudley's leftovers. Vernon didn't have any leftovers and the only reason Dudley had leftovers was that he wanted to try every happy meal.

After returning home with the shopping, Mrs. Granger took them out again to the cinema. There wasn't much choice. Hermione would have preferred seeing 1941, but again insisted that Harry should choose as this was only the second time he'd been to a cinema and the previous time Mrs. Granger had taken them, Hermione had chosen the film. To her disappointment, he chose the Muppet Movie, which Hermione didn't like at all.

After they arrived home, Mrs. Granger waited for Harry to go to use the toilet, then took her daughter aside. "I'm proud of you, darling."

"Why?"

"I could see you thought the film was stupid, and to be honest I was afraid you'd say something to Harry about it, but you didn't."

"I know, Mum. He was so happy today. I can't believe they left him in the car park at a McDonald's and that he'd never once been to see a film until we took him."

"He's missed so much in his life up to now, so we'll just have to make it up to him, won't we?"

Hermione grinned.

That night they tried again to dream Hermione's dreams. Hermione suggested that as she normally held Harry as they went to sleep, perhaps they'd have more success if they started with him holding her. Her idea was dashed when they ended up waking up twice in the night with the memory of Harry's mother's screams.

It was quite a tired and drawn-looking pair of children who greeted Professor Flitwick the following morning.

"Before we start the lesson today, can we ask you a question?" Hermione asked him.

He smiled. "I think you just did. Okay. What's the question?"

"Since we've been sleeping in just our underwear, Harry's dreams have been stronger and keep waking us up. But we can't seem to get into my memories at all."

The professor looked serious. "I think Professor Dumbledore may be able to help with this. I'll ask him to come and see you tomorrow, if that's all right?"

"Okay," said Harry, uncertainly.

"Now, I'm afraid that I'm not going to be able to visit you as often as I'm getting behind on my work. I'm going to take you somewhere where they will be able to help you. Don't worry, I've let your mother know. Follow me please."

He stepped into the fireplace and spoke loudly, "The Burrow," then disappeared in the usual flash of green flame.

Harry and Hermione looked at each other. "The Burrow?" asked Harry.

"That's what he said," Hermione replied. "Let's go together. Ready? 1 – 2 – 3."

"The Burrow!" they cried together and a few seconds later they were falling out of the fireplace in the strangest looking living room they had ever seen, much to the obvious amusement of Professor Flitwick.

It seemed incredibly cluttered and disorganised and the staircase looked like it wouldn't stay standing for a moment. It was a total contrast from the cold sterility of the Dursleys' house or even the usually tidy and well laid-out Granger house. But it gave them both a homely impression.

That impression increased when a cheerful-looking middle-aged man walked down the staircase, proving it was stronger than it looked, and stepped forward to greet them. "Hello, Harry, Hermione. I'm Arthur Weasley. And Professor Flitwick seems to think that these two rogues behind me can help you in your training. This is Fred and this is George." He was pointing to two identical twin boys.

"Da-ad," said the one Mr. Weasley has just called Fred. "I'm George. You're as bad as mum."

"And I'm Fred," said the other.

"or is it George?" said the first.

"I don't know, I can never remember," replied the second.

"Hang on," said the first.

"Conference time," finished the second.

They whispered together for a few seconds.

"He's Gred," they both said together, pointing at each other, "and I'm Forge."

Both Professor Flitwick and Arthur Weasley seemed to be making a great effort not to laugh. Harry and Hermione had no such inhibitions and after looking bewildered for a second or two, burst out laughing.

The twins went up to Hermione and one of them lifted the hair away from her forehead.

"It can't be," said one, in a hushed tone.

"It is you know," the other replied.

"You're Hermione Granger," they said together.

"The One Who Saved..." said one.

"...The Boy Who Lived," finished the other.

Both put their hands to their foreheads and pretended to faint.

When they "came around", they looked briefly at each other, then at Harry and asked, "And who are you?"

At that, Professor Flitwick gave up the struggle and burst out laughing. "Er, I'm Harry Potter," Harry said when he could actually speak for laughing.

"Don't worry," Arthur assured Harry and Hermione, "you'll get used to them."

"How many years does that take?" Hermione quipped.

"Quite a few," said Arthur.

"She's quick this one," said one of the twins.

"We'll have to keep an eye on her," said the other.

"They remind me so much of the Marauders," sighed Professor Flitwick. "And they come to Hogwarts, next year is it?"

"You couldn't take them now by any chance?" asked Arthur.

"I don't think Hogwarts is ready for them," laughed the professor.

"And you really want these to duel with Harry and Hermione?" asked Arthur. "I'm not sure it's a good idea teaching these two magic before you have to."

"I'll probably survive the experience," replied the professor.

"I don't know about you," said one of the twins.

"But I think we've been insulted," finished the other.

"Enough," said Arthur, firmly. "I was going to say, before these two interrupted, that Fred and George are just two of my children. I think you met Bill, He's our oldest, and he's at Hogwarts with Charlie and Percy."

At Percy's name, the twins looked like they were going to say something, but a look from Arthur changed their mind."

"Then, after these two rascals, Molly, that's my wife, and I have Ron, who's your age, and Ginny. She's a year younger. Ron will be in your year at Hogwarts. Molly took Ron and Ginny out for a while, we thought too many at once might be too much for you."

"I think," began one of the twins.

"That when Ginny comes back..." continued the other.

"We'll make ourselves scarce."

"Why?" asked Hermione.

"Ginny's favourite bedtime story is The Boy Who Lived," Arthur explained. "She's not going to be happy she missed meeting Harry, but we didn't think Harry should have to deal with an over excitable Ginny on his first visit."

"Over excitable," said one of the twins.

"THAT'S what she is," said the other.

"And we thought she was just crazy," they finished together.

The Professor took Harry and Hermione's wand and performed some kind of silent charm on them.

"What did you do?" asked Hermione.

"Your shield charm will only work to protect each other, not yourselves. Now go outside and play."

"Fred! George!" boomed Arthur as the four children ran outside. "Be nice. Nothing too nasty."

Arthur and the professor decided to follow the children outside, just to supervise.

Molly had taken the twins into Diagon Alley the day before to buy their wands. Professor Dumbledore had insisted that he would pay for their wands as she was only having to buy them then to help Harry and Hermione. Molly had argued that they would have had to buy them anyway, just a year later, but Olivander told her the wands were already paid for and refused to accept any money for them.

The twins had been so amazed at being given their wands a year earlier than normal that they had been unusually silent during the visit to Olivanders. That hadn't last more than a few minutes after they arrived home, and only ten minutes after arriving home, Molly had had to confiscate their wands as they had already managed to jinx each other with boils and nearly set fire to the kitchen.

So it was only Professor Flitwick who was surprised that the twins already knew quite a few jinxes. He said so to Arthur.

"It's not surprising," replied Arthur. "Bill and Charlie show them everything they can."

The twins quickly found that both Harry and Hermione were capable of reacting quickly with their shield charms, so they soon called a "time out" to confer and decided to attack both Harry and Hermione at the same time.

Hermione saw it coming and protected Harry, but Harry wasn't quite so quick and Hermione collapsed laughing as the tickling hex hit her. They quickly discovered that if they were together, touching, the resulting shield was much more powerful.

Arthur noticed too, as their shields suddenly changed from pale halos when they were apart to a more obvious single shimmering disc from the moment they began to hold each other's hand.

"Is that the bond?" Arthur asked the professor, as Hermione made a particularly solid-looking shield.

"Partly," the professor replied. "But I charmed their wands to work that way so that they would get used to working together."

For the next few "rounds" the twins couldn't hit either Harry or Hermione, then Hermione called for a "time out". A minute later, Hermione was hit and fell to the ground. Harry ran to her and even the twins were concerned as she took longer than expected to get back up.

Harry took Hermione's hand as if to lift her as the twins approached. They turned their wands on the twins and almost shouted, "Aguamenti!" A huge wave of water erupted from their wands, totally drenching the twins.

Harry and Hermione were nervous as a stunned pair of twins approached them.

"Fred," said George. "I think we've been pranked."

"I told you we'd have to keep an eye on her," Fred replied.

"And we were right," finished George.

"Well done, you two," said Professor Flitwick, while casting a drying charm on the twins.

"You couldn't teach us that one, could you?" George asked the professor.

"Only I think we might need it," finished Fred.

Harry giggled at the pair of them.

Hermione asked, "How long did it take you two to learn to talk like that?"

"Like what?" asked Fred.

"Finishing what each other are saying all the time."

"I don't know..."

"What she means."

"Do you?"

"No, I don't either."

Hermione gave up, realising that she wasn't going to get a serious answer out of either of them.

After some quick goodbyes, Professor Flitwick, Harry and Hermione flooded back to the Grangers' home. After greeting the Grangers, he pronounced their first day with the Weasleys a success.

"Did you two have a good time?" asked Mr. Granger.



"The twins were great," enthused Harry.

"Really funny. Totally crazy, but really funny," added Hermione.  
"You'd love them, Dad."

Professor Flitwick smiled and said, "I think that's enough training for one day, so you have the afternoon free. Remember, Professor Dumbledore will be here tomorrow to help you with your dreaming problem. Now from next week, Remus Lupin will be taking over most of your training. Do you remember him?"

"Was he the one that called Madam Pomfrey when we were getting ill?" Hermione asked.

"That's right. He was very close to your father, Harry. He wanted to be with you as soon as Madam Pomfrey let you return from Hogwarts."

"Then why didn't he come?" asked Harry, bluntly.

The professor seemed taken aback by the question. "Er... He wasn't well last weekend, couldn't go out."

"Won't we be seeing you again?" asked Hermione.

The professor smiled. "Don't worry, you'll still see me."

As he floated away, Mr. Granger asked them, "Dreaming problem?"

"We keep dreaming Harry's nightmares, yet he can't get into my mind at all."

"And how is this Dumbledore going to help you with that?"

"We don't know," said Harry.

"Professor Flitwick didn't say," Hermione explained. "He just said that he would be able to."

Sensing that her father was still uncomfortable with the idea of Professor Dumbledore having anything to do with his daughter, she decided to change the subject and spent the next fifteen minutes telling her father exactly what had happened at the Burrow.

To Hermione, her mother's call for lunch hadn't tasted so sweet in ages, providing the needed distraction for her father to stop trying to turn back the conversation toward Dumbledore.

The afternoon and evening were quiet, as they watched television. Once they were in bed Harry again concentrated on trying to dream Hermione's dreams, with the same lack of success as before.

They passed another night disturbed by Harry's nightmares which woke them three times again. The only positive thing in Hermione's opinion, was that Harry no longer felt the need to apologise for the nightmares.

Nevertheless, it was two very tired children who awoke the next morning ready to see Professor Dumbledore.

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Author's note...

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

Please review,

Brian

# The Harmony bond, chapter sixteen.

### Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

They had a day out and met the Weasley twins.

[illegible]

Regardless of his position in the wizarding world, Albus Dumbledore had always believed in treating people correctly and with good manners and respect for their culture, which was why he in turn had the respect of races as different as giants, centaurs, goblins and even werewolves.

It had been a considerable time however, since he had had much contact directly with muggles, despite having many muggle-born students at Hogwarts, so, after being forced to intervene in Harry's situation, he had taken the time to obtain and read a book on muggle customs and behaviour.

While he didn't know how the Grangers felt about wizarding people strolling into their home, his reading led him to understand that current muggle custom made it important to call before showing up for an appointment. Thus, he took some floo powder, and, about an hour before his appointed time at the Grangers, he started a floo call.

His head spun for what he felt like a small eternity and, just when he thought he would have to pull out or risk making himself sick, his head finally landed on the other side.

“Professor Dumbledore!” cried a very surprised Mrs. Granger, who was now kneeling in front of the fire.

“When I was younger, I would have replied ‘the one and only’, but I’m a little too old for such arrogance.”

Mrs Granger asked him, “How may I help you, professor? Are you still coming?”

“Of course, Mrs Granger. I thought it was muggle custom to call some time before arrival.”

“Well, that mostly applies if there is some problem and you can't come or have to change the time. I very much appreciate the gesture, though.”

“You're welcome. Everything is going well there, I trust?”

“We wouldn’t say so, professor. The kids don’t really seem to have had any sleep last night, again.”

“That won’t do,” he said, nodding thoughtfully. “Well, I’ll be there in an hour and see what we can do about that.”

“They’ll be waiting for you in the lounge. We'll expect you later, then.”

Professor Dumbledore pulled his head out of the fire and, after making sure his long beard was completely out of the fire, began shaking the ash from his head.

With another hour to go, he could either keep trying to find something obscure and arcane on his private collection of mind-magic books, or he could try to relax before the meeting and thus be better capable of performing those same mind charms.

He could even continue trying to solve the eight-year-old enigma of his old Rubik’s cube, which might help him be better attuned to solve the enigma of Harry Potter and Hermione Granger.

Decisions, decisions.

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The professor had mixed feelings to Harry's reaction when he arrived at the Grangers' house that morning. He was disappointed that Harry was still nervous of him, but immensely pleased that Harry's instinctive reaction had been to move closer to Hermione on the sofa.

Not wanting to embarrass either of them, he didn't comment, but did allow himself a small smile before saying, "Well, Professor Flitwick tells me that you are both doing really well. In fact he was most curious about the shield you cast when you were holding hands."

"Why, Professor?" asked Hermione.

"Firstly, he had charmed your wands so that neither of you could protect yourself, but only each other, to force you to work together. Yet the joint shield seems to have circumvented the wording of the charm and found a more direct way to work together and achieve the aim of the charm. More importantly, it was much much, more powerful than the individual shields."

"So we are more powerful together?"

"More than that. At your age and level of training, neither of you would be able to cast a shield. The only reason you can is because the professor charmed your wands to do so each time you attempt to cast a shield. In reality, it was his magic, not yours that has been casting your shields, likewise the water spell he showed you, but this new shield was more than the charm he had cast, it can only have been your own magic."

Hermione immediately caught on. "So if all our previous spells were really just our words activating the charms Professor Flitwick had put on our wands, but this one wasn't, we've really just cast our first spell?"

Professor Dumbledore smiled, "Yes, Hermione, excluding any past accidental magic, it would appear that the bond has enabled you to cast your first deliberate spell and quite a powerful one at that. It will be interesting to see if you can cast spells separately. Would you give me your wands for a moment, please?"

He waved his own wand over their wands, saying "Finite Incantatem." He handed the wands back. "I have removed the charm Professor Flitwick placed on them. See if you can cast a shield."

Hermione tried first, but no trace of a shield appeared. She looked disappointed.

Then Harry tried. The end of his wand seemed to glow for a moment, but then faded away.

"At least you did better than I did," said Hermione, obviously disappointed.

Choosing to ignore the slightly jealous tone in Hermione's voice, Professor Dumbledore commented, "The fact that either of you could get any result whatsoever is surprising. Not amazingly so, but quite surprising. Out of curiosity, what happens if you try doing it together?"

They both tried to cast the spell, but still nothing happened, although the end of Hermione's wand also glowed a little this time.

"We were holding hands yesterday," Harry reminded Hermione.

Blushing, she took his hand. "Protego!"

A small disc seemed to flow out of each of their wands, joining a few feet from them.

"It's much smaller than yesterday," Hermione commented. They tried to make it bigger, but without any success whatsoever.

"Do you mind if I cast a spell at both of you? Try to keep up your shield."

As Dumbledore cast his spell, their joint shield grew larger and brighter for a moment. His spell was dissipated as it touch the shield.

"Interesting. I think that has to be your bond. It perceives a threat to itself and reacts to defend the two of you."

He put his wand down, and so did Harry and Hermione.

Hermione looked puzzled. "Miss Granger? Is something bothering you?" He half smiled to himself at the realisation that he had just addressed her not as a child, but as he would address one of his students at Hogwarts.

"The bond can do something on it's own?" she asked. "I thought it was just part of us?"

"Bonds are rare enough that nobody really knows. It does seem, when a bond is forming that it seems to act independently of the two bond-mates, an obvious example being when you were both in hospital and collapsed if you were apart. Neither of you consciously made that happen. I think you are asking if the bond is somehow apart, a third person trying to take you over. The answer to that is no. The few bond-mates who have ever talked about their experience make no mention of any such third consciousness, just that they are still two separate people, but united in a way most of us can only envy. Some of our researchers have speculated that in the early stages the bond is made up of parts of what muggle psychologists would call your unconscious selves which recognises the need and makes it happen."

To the professor's relief, as Harry looked somewhat lost, Hermione looked satisfied with his answer.

"Now, while casting spells is fun, I am here on a more serious matter. I hear you are having trouble sleeping now you are sleeping together. You both look exhausted. I spoke with Madam Pomfrey about this, asking if you should sleep apart, but she said that that could be dangerous."

"So what do we do?" asked Harry, in a frustrated voice.

"As I see it, the problem is with both of you. Please do not be embarrassed by what I am about to say, but Hermione, although you come from an obviously loving and supportive family, you have trouble relating to others of your own age, is that correct?"

She nodded.

"Let me guess, if I may. You find them childish and silly and they find you boring."

"Hermione's not boring!" cried Harry.

"I didn't say she was, Harry. I'm afraid that in wizarding society as well as in muggle society, someone much more intelligent and studious than those around them is often seen as boring and has trouble making friends."

"Studious?" asked Harry.

"Studious," repeated the professor. "It means somebody who like to read and study a lot."

Harry grinned. "That's Hermione."

Hermione wasn't smiling. "I... When I heard I'm a witch, I thought it might be different. Won't I ever have any friends?"

"You'll have me!" cried Harry.

Professor Dumbledore looked sadly at her, then smiled. "To be exceptionally bright has it's downsides. But, yes, you will find friends, perhaps where you least expect them. But we have to learn to accept those who are less bright as they are if we want them to accept us. But I digress. Every time you have tried to have a friend up to now, they have quickly become bored with you, is that right?"

Hermione nodded tearfully.

"I think you have put up a wall around you, to stop yourself getting hurt. May I look into your mind?"

"How?"

"It won't hurt, I assure you."



Nervously, Hermione nodded again and the professor was relieved to see that neither she nor Harry saw him flick his wand at the door to ensure that nobody else could hear what went on.

The professor looked into her eyes for what seemed like an age. "A fine strong wall. It will serve you well in the future, I am sure, but right now, it is preventing you from sharing yourself with Harry. If I might say this, a wall to prevent us from getting hurt only stops us from getting touched. Without the touch, it still hurts, am I right?"

Harry was glaring at the professor as Hermione was openly crying. "That's enough."

"Harry, if I am to help Hermione, I have to teach her how to help herself."

Harry still looked uncertain until Hermione said, "It's alright, Harry."

"Now," said the professor, turning to Harry, "may I look into your mind?"

Harry looked openly scared until Hermione took his hand, then he nodded.

Hermione looked between Harry and Professor Dumbledore as the professor looked into Harry's eyes. The professor's expression changed rapidly from shock to anger to sadness.

"I had no idea," he gasped.

Breaking the contact, the professor had to visibly compose himself before speaking. "Harry, normally when we are hurt by somebody, our mind tries to build defences, as Hermione has done. You have almost no mental defences at all. I think you've been told for so long that you aren't worth anything and been hurt so much, that your mind has just given up. That's why Hermione can so easily dream your dreams, your mind is simply overflowing with bad memories with none of the normal protections we all use."

At the look of shame on Harry's face, the professor looked him in the eye once more. "Harry, what they have been drumming into you for years is a vicious lie. You are worth ten of the Dursleys."

"Twenty," said Hermione.

The professor smiled for the first time since seeing into Harry's mind. "I would believe her if I were you, Harry. If I can make a prediction, she will almost certainly become the brightest witch of her age and have an annoying tendency of being right."

Harry managed a half smile.

"Harry, there is nothing I can do, yet, to help you. You have to begin to believe in your own worth. I think that Hermione and her parents can help you with that far more than I can. But you and I can help Hermione."

"How, sir?" asked Harry.

"Hermione, I want you to think of your high brick wall in your mind. Can you see it?"

"I think so."

"Now, I want you to imagine a door in the wall. Can you describe it to us?"

Hermione described a large red front door, similar to the front door on their house.

"Good, now I want you to concentrate on opening the door, not all the way, just a little. Now, Harry, take Hermione's hand and look into her eyes. In your mind, look for that door. Don't be surprised if you don't find it at once, this might take days of practice. When you do find it, help Hermione to open it."

After a few minutes, the professor said firmly, "That's enough for now, this is very tiring. That is exercise one."

"I didn't see anything," said Harry, scowling.

"I'd have been very surprised if you had done so, Harry," the professor said. "Now for exercise two. Hermione, look into Harry's eyes. Don't deliberately try to see what's there, but imagine yourself building your wall, but in his mind, one brick at a time. Harry, imagine yourself helping her.

Once again, after just a few minutes, Professor Dumbledore insisted, "That's enough for now."

"But I didn't even do one brick," protested Hermione.

"Legilimency, which is what we are doing, is very advanced and extremely tiring to learn. I want you both to promise me that you won't try to do either exercise for more than a few minutes at a time."

The two children nodded solemnly.

"But rather than make study sessions of it, just try it for a few minutes when you have time together to spare during the day. Don't expect much success right away, this is a difficult skill to learn fully."

Professor Dumbledore got up. "Now, before I go, I'd like to speak to your parents please, Hermione."

"I'll get them."

When she returned with her parents, neither of them looked happy.

"You are angry with me because it is obvious that both Hermione and Harry have been crying," stated Professor Dumbledore.

Hermione's parents didn't answer, but just glowered at him.

"You have many things to rightly be angry with me about, but this isn't one of them. The memories they are sharing in their nightmares are dangerous, not only because some of them frankly make me wonder how Harry has even stayed sane, nor because of the inherent

dangers of constant sleep disturbance, but also because of the imbalance."

"Can you explain that?" asked Mr. Granger.

"Yes. In a bond, there is mental sharing between the two partners. That two-way sharing is not only essential for the health of the relationship generally, but for the formation of the bond. At the moment, when they are asleep, Harry's mind is flooding your daughter's mind with his worst memories, including seeing his mother killed and Voldemort trying to kill him. Not only is Hermione simply mentally unprepared for such an onslaught, the one-way nature of the onslaught will eventually break the bond." He didn't mention the consequences of that, he knew the Grangers were already only too aware of them.

He quickly turned to Harry, who was looking distraught. "Harry, for both your sakes, I must ask you to do something."

"Yes?" asked Harry desperately.

"You must stop blaming yourself. You didn't choose any of this. You didn't choose your life with the Dursleys, you didn't choose the memories which are affecting Hermione and you most certainly didn't choose to have your mother murdered in front of your eyes. You have nothing to feel guilty about. For Hermione's sake you must try to push those thoughts aside." He was glad to see Hermione take and squeeze Harry's hand.

He turned back to Hermione's parents. "Before you ask, I have consulted with Madam Pomfrey to see if we can do anything to prevent this, like separating them at night, but she tells me that that would be equally dangerous. The bond must form at it's own pace."

"Can't we do anything?" asked Mrs. Granger desperately.

"I have given them some exercises which will help them overcome the imbalance and, hopefully, the nightmares. There are not easy. There are not pleasant, at first anyway. They are upsetting as you have seen, but they are necessary."

"Dad," said Hermione, before her parents could say anything. "We have to do this. I can't take much more of these dreams at night."

Turning to his daughter, Mr. Granger nodded. "We know."

"But there is something you can do to help your daughter and Harry."

"What's that?" asked Mrs. Granger at once.

"As I said, I have given them some exercises to help them, but they are tiring, exhausting in fact. They have promised me that they won't do them for more than a few minutes, but if I am right about your daughter, she won't be able to resist trying to achieve them."

Hermione's parents managed a weak smile.

"It is essential that you don't allow her to do so. At least until she has the necessary skills, trying for too long will exhaust her totally, leaving her wide open to the worst of Harry's memories when they go to sleep."

Seeing that Harry was obviously about to apologise, the professor said sternly, "Harry, you are not responsible for the memories you have. You can blame Voldemort, the Dursleys, teachers at school who should have protected you from the bullies and me, both for sending you there and for not checking on you. None of those memories are your fault."

"Excuse me, Professor," asked Mrs. Granger, "but how long is too long for the exercises?"

The professor thought for a moment. "I should say no longer than five minutes on each of the two exercises, and with a rest of at least three hours before they try again." Then he turned back to Harry. "Now, Harry, I'm asking you to be strong as well. Do not allow Hermione to overdo things, for her own sake."

"I won't, sir."

The professor smiled. "You look and sound so much like your father. He would have been proud of you. And, now, I must take my leave of you all. Mr. Granger, Mrs. Granger, if I might suggest, the rest of the day should be for them to relax rather than study."

"Are you sure you won't stay for a cup of tea or something?" Mrs. Granger asked him.

The professor hesitated. "Well, that might be very nice. Although I am sure that the Hogwarts kitchens would be pleased to bring me tea whenever I want it, I don't like to trouble them too much."

"Can you tell us about Harry's parents?" asked Mrs. Granger, when she had served them all with tea.

The professor smiled.

"They were the unlikeliest couple you could imagine. James seemed to take a fancy for Lily since the very first time she saw her in their first year at Hogwarts. However, he was boisterous and care-free with a certain disregard for the rules, whereas she was strict and meticulous. He tried to relate to her as many small boys try to relate to girls they like, by... well..."

"Pulling her pigtails?" suggested Mrs Granger, jovially.

"Quite literally, I'm afraid," the professor said, seemingly not noticing how Mrs Granger playfully drove an elbow into her husband's gut. "It didn't take a week for a nice love-hate relationship to develop between them. As the years passed, he was attracted to her, but she thought him an arrogant idiot, and, I might add, often told him so."

"I have to admit that he was somewhat arrogant, but he was certainly not an idiot. He had an arrogance which many with a long heritage of wizarding ancestors are prone to. Lily, however, was muggleborn, like Hermione. Lily was an exceptional student and the most sensible thing James did do, was to set his heart on her. In his second-to-final year at Hogwarts, he realised that to win her, he had to change, so he did, almost overnight. So much so that he became head boy in his final year even though he hadn't been a prefect."

"The two fell in love in their final year. I must admit, him being head boy while she was head girl helped them spend enough time together for Lily to see who he really was, not that that was why I made him head boy.

"Hermione, sadly some in the wizarding world think that muggleborns are inferior. That is not true, far from it, and Lily was an example of that. I am sure that you will be too.

"When James and Lily found out that Lily was pregnant, less than a year after they married, they were as happy as I can remember them. They loved you very much, Harry. Never doubt that. Never doubt that for a moment."

Harry nodded.

"And now, I really must be going. Any of you, please feel free to call me if you need me. Otherwise, I will return next weekend to see how those exercises are coming along."

Rather than using the floo, the professor apparated away.

After lunch, Hermione wanted to try their legilimency exercises again and her parents watched, stopping her sooner than she would have liked. When Hermione argued that it hadn't been that long, her mother said they'd use the kitchen timer next time to avoid arguments.

Even though they hadn't been allowed to continue the exercises any longer, they were both tired and decided to go to bed to rest for a while. They were soon both asleep and slept for most of the afternoon, thankfully peacefully.

They were awoken for dinner by Mrs. Granger. "You won't sleep tonight if I let you sleep any longer," she explained. "And dinner's ready."

During dinner all three Grangers tried to get Harry to choose how they would spend the next day. Hermione whispered something to

her mother and she nodded. While he was helping Mr. Granger with the washing up, Harry didn't notice Hermione sneak away by floo.

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Author's note...

Thanks to 06slayrz for pointing out that Mrs. Granger HAD taken Hermione and Harry to the cinema once before, when Harry had been sent back to the Dursleys. That is now corrected in the previous chapter. Nachoman says he's getting a week worth of vacations, so he wants to re-read the entire story and try to spot all sorts of stuff.

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, who, as well as editing, this time wrote the first draft of the whole of the first section as well as some of Dumbledore's recollections of James and Lily.

Please review,

Brian



## The Harmony bond, chapter seventeen.

### Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

## Dumbledore began to teach them Legilimency

[illegible]

Another disturbed night's sleep left both children exhausted. As they came down for breakfast, Mrs Granger couldn't help but think that the children were looking like the undead, pale, moody and, in Hermione's case, unnaturally quiet. Mrs. Granger asked Hermione to floo-call Madam Pomfrey, who insisted on coming right away to check on them.

"Happy birthday, Hermione," she said the moment she arrived, then added, "and an extremely belated happy birthday to you too, Harry. Now, let me check you both. Who's first?"

Harry stepped forward. Madam Pomfrey took some time scanning him with her wand, frowning the whole time.

"Now you, Hermione." She repeated the process. "Hmm. I'll be back in a minute." She flooded away, only to return with a large, dark bottle. "Could you get me two glasses, please?"

In the kitchen, she poured out two half glasses of the thick liquid. Hermione recognised it at once. "But we can't take dreamless sleep potion, we've got the party."

"Party?" asked Harry.

"Not until this afternoon," replied Madam Pomfrey. "And you want to be well rested so you can enjoy it. Straight to bed both of you. I'll come up with the potion in a few minutes."

Reluctantly Hermione headed for bed, with Harry following her saying, "What party?"

After Madam Pomfrey had gone upstairs and given them the potions, she returned and handed the bottle to Mrs. Granger. "Despite the setbacks, the bond IS growing stronger. I won't pretend they are out of the woods yet, but they are heading in the right direction. While they are practising the exercises Professor Dumbledore has given them, just for the next couple of nights, gave them a glassful each of this potion. I'd rather not use it, but they need their strength for the exercises."

"Thank you for coming."

"That's fine. And, Mrs. Granger..."

"Yes?"

"Next time they have a night that bad, call me. Don't wait until the morning."

Mrs. Granger nodded.

"I might suggest you take something tonight to help you relax as well."

Mrs. Granger shook her head. "I want to be able to hear them if they are having a bad time."

Madam Pomfrey nodded understandingly. "I know this must be hard for you, not only because it's your daughter, but it's something totally foreign to you. Can I make a suggestion?"

"Of course."



them as he'd had to tell them when he'd made the booking that there would be almost as many adults in the party itself as there would be children. He wondered what they'd think when some of them turned up dressed oddly as well.

He knew that Hermione had warned them to "dress muggle", as she'd put it, but he'd seen enough of the wizarding world's idea of muggle clothing to know that they didn't exactly blend in unnoticed. In fact he was quite looking forward to seeing the reaction of the staff to the likes of Professors Dumbledore and Flitwick.

Harry had been more excited than they had ever seen him when they drove up to the McDonald's and had been shown into the area set aside for their party. Mr. Granger dropped them off, saying he would be back shortly. As he drove back to his house he laughed, remembering how he wasn't looking forward to being the taxi service for a teenage daughter. Now she was eight years old, no, nine, he corrected himself, and he was running a shuttle service between the floo in their house and McDonald's.

Hermione had done the planning of course, who else, and decided on where to hold the party. Harry had been at his happiest yet when he'd been taken to McDonald's, so Hermione had decided that it was the perfect location. When she'd been deciding who to invite, on the basis of who was important to Harry, he'd reminded his daughter that this was HER party and she should pick people who were important to her as well. "Don't you have any friends you can invite?" he had asked her, then wished he hadn't as she shook her head sadly.

"Dad. Harry IS my friend. And can you imagine what the kids in my school would make of the people I have invited?"

His musings were interrupted as the Weasleys came through the floo. Mr. Weasley took so long looking around him in fascination that he was actually knocked over by the arrival of two twin boys, who their father immediately introduced as Fred and George.

"I think this will take two trips," he said, not having realised that he'd be taking not only Mr. And Mrs. Weasley and the twins, but two younger children as well. Hermione hadn't mentioned them.

"Oh, don't worry," Mr. Weasley had said, simply waving his wand at the Granger family car and saying something that sound like Latin.

He couldn't keep the amazement from his face when he opened the car door to find that it was actually bigger inside than outside.

"Er... Is it safe? I mean, it won't change back will it?"

"Not until I make it change back. You can keep it like this if you like."

Mr. Granger was tempted, but then replied, "I think it might be a little difficult to explain."

"True, and we can't have that. In you get everyone... Tell me, is it true that a car runs on fire?"

Mr. Granger was still attempting to explain the principles of the internal combustion engine when they arrived at McDonald's. Showing them the entrance, he immediately drove off again to pick up the rest of the guests, who should be waiting for him by now.

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"Hello, Hermione, Harry, Happy Birthday," said a beaming Mr. Weasley. More formally than his usual style, he continued, "May I introduce my wife, Molly? You already know the twins."

Molly Weasley almost ran to Harry and gave the startled boy a hug, before turning to Hermione to do the same. "I'm very pleased to meet you both."

"So am I," said a small red-headed girl. "Anyone who can get one up on the twins is incredible. I'm Ginny," she added, "the only girl, worst luck." She turned to Hermione and asked, "You don't want a few more brothers, do you?" Without giving Hermione a chance to reply she went on, "Actually, you're both lucky. The twins usually play pranks on birthdays, but they can't use magic in front of muggles."

"Pranks?" asked Harry.

"My birthday, last month, they turned my hair green." She looked somehow both exasperated and amused at the memory. "Even Mum couldn't change it back. It took days."

A red-headed boy pushed himself forward. Ignoring Hermione, he asked, "Do you really have the scar?"

Harry looked down at the table and nodded.

"Wicked."

"This is Ron," explained Ginny. "He's not always an idiot, or so rude."

For a moment Ron looked like he was going to say some smart retort, then he obviously changed his mind. "Sorry. I'm Ron. It's just that Ginny never stops going on about you and when the twins said we were meeting you, I thought it was a joke." He turned to Hermione and said, "Happy birthday Hermy...er."

"Hermione. Hermione Granger."

"Oh, right. The twins said you were brainy. Do you play chess?"

Hermione shook her head and Ron looked disappointed for a moment.

They were guided to their seats by Molly as three very familiar people walked in the door. As she got up to run to greet Madam Pomfrey, Hermione couldn't help overhearing Ginny arguing with Ron. "I am NOT always going on about Harry."

"You are."

"Am not."

"Are..."

Hermione's attention was pulled back, though, as Madam Pomfrey came and hugged her and Harry. "Happy birthday Hermione, and you too Harry," said Madam Pomfrey.

"It's not really my birthday," Harry tried to explain.

"We know, Harry. But every little boy deserves a birthday party, and as we missed yours..."

Harry looked sad for a moment and Hermione turned round and snapped at him, "You DO deserve a party."

Professor Dumbledore was behind Madam Pomfrey, with Professors Flitwick and McGonagall. "Hermione is correct, Harry. Do not believe what the Dursleys have told you."

Harry still looked uncertain, but didn't get a chance to say anything further as Hermione turned back to Professor Dumbledore.

"Thank you for coming," she said, politely. She gave him a quick hug, then hugged a rather surprised Professor McGonagall. "And Professor Flitwick. Thank you for coming too," giving the rather embarrassed man an even longer and more enthusiastic hug.

"THAT'S Professor Flitwick?" Ron said in a whisper loud enough for almost everyone to hear. "How can he teach them duelling? A puff of wind would blow him over."

"Looks can be deceiving, Mr. Weasley," said Professor McGonagall sternly, "as you will no doubt find out when you come to Hogwarts."

"Professor Flitwick was the Hogwarts duelling champion," added the elder Mr. Weasley, his face showing annoyance at his youngest son's rudeness.

"Not to mention quite a prankster in his younger days from what we heard," said a voice behind the Professors.

"To those of you who don't know him, may I introduce Mr. Lupin," said Professor Dumbledore.

Hermione noticed that her parent's, who had looked a little tense since the arrival of Professor Dumbledore looked genuinely pleased to see Remus Lupin.

"I want to thank you," said Mrs. Granger. "You called in Madam Pomfrey just in time. I don't know what would have happened if..."

"My dear lady, you are most welcome. Harry's father did so much for me, this was small repayment."

"I hear that you will be helping their training?"

"Helping, yes. Professor Flitwick will remain in charge," then he added in a tone of obviously-faked dread, "under the ever watchful eye of Madam Pomfrey."

Hermione giggled.

"Harry. Already you look so much like your father, except for your mother's eyes."

Harry looked uncomfortable, and Hermione noticed that he was shifting a little in his seat, but it was the restaurant staff who rescued him from having to find a reply by bringing in the food.

Although Harry was still small for his age, Hermione had noted how Harry's appetite was now pretty much normal for a boy of his age, that is to say, bottomless. Molly Weasley mentioned, approvingly, that he rivalled the twins in his appetite, of the children only Ron managing to eat more.

"I couldn't eat another thing," Harry said happily.

"You won't want any cake then?" asked Mrs. Granger, who at that moment was bringing in an enormous cake.

Harry grinned.

"Always room for cake, eh, Harry?" asked Mr. Weasley.



"Yes, Mr. Weasley."

Everyone sang "Happy Birthday" to Hermione and Harry. The twins had started to sing another version until they caught their mother's eye on them.

Harry and Hermione cut the cake together, then Mrs. Granger cut it into portions.

"Now is it time for presents?" asked Ginny, obviously excited.

"Yes," replied her mother. "You can give them their presents now."

Ginny went to Hermione first. "They're not much," she said, "Mum's been teaching me to knit." She handed Hermione a pair of gloves which looked rather too big and rather misshapen. "Put them on," she insisted.

When Hermione put them on, she was surprised to see that they shrank onto her hand until they fit perfectly. "Wow! That's brilliant! Thank you." She gave a slightly embarrassed Ginny a kiss on the cheek.

"Mum did the sizing charm," Ginny admitted, then she turned to Harry and gave him another pair of gloves.

Harry didn't have to be told to put them on. He watched, fascinated, as they sized themselves to his hands.

"It only works once," Ginny explained, "so they'll always be yours, but they will grow with you. And they're charmed to always be warm as well."

Harry was so intrigued by the gloves he almost didn't notice Ginny still waiting expectantly, until Hermione gave a little cough.

"Huh? Oh, Thank you, Ginny." Seeing Hermione nudge her head towards Ginny, he leaned over and gave Ginny a kiss on the cheek as Hermione had done.

Ginny looked exceptionally pleased.

"We're never going to hear the end of this," sighed Ron. "I've been kissed by Harry Potter," he added, doing a fair imitation of his sister. "Here's my present to you both. Sorry it's not much." He handed Harry a box and stepped back, seemingly afraid that he might get a kiss as well. Hermione tried not to laugh and she helped Harry unwrap the box to reveal a chess set.

"Thank you, Ron," said Harry.

"You're welcome. It's only an old one, I'm afraid. I can teach you to play if you like."

Hermione spotted Ginny, who was making movements with her arms. Then with a grin, she gave a highly embarrassed Ron a massive hug. "Thank you, Ron. We'd really like that."

Ron extricated himself from Hermione's grasp to sniggers from Ginny and the twins.

"Our turn," said George, or at least Hermione thought it was George.

"Just one present for you both again, I'm afraid," the other one said.

"We don't have a lot of money in our family," the first one explained in a whisper. His mother obviously heard as she looked a little embarrassed.

Hermione was going to say something, but to her surprise, Harry beat her to it. "Money's nothing. My uncle and aunt were stinking rich, but I'd take your family over theirs any day."

"They're not really rich," Hermione corrected him. "I mean our house is bigger than theirs. Does that mean we're stinking rich?"

Realising that he'd managed to upset her, he stammered, "I didn't mean, I mean..."

Hermione rescued him. "You mean money isn't important."

Despite that there was a slight embarrassed pause, until Hermione said, "so what's the present, then?"

Laughing, the twins handed her a book. "It's for both of you. It's brilliant. Taught us everything we know."

"1001 magical tricks," Hermione read, realising that this book wasn't going to be like muggle card tricks.

"I can help you with them if you like," offered Ginny.

The Weasley parents gave them a matching pair of warm jumpers, to match the gloves Ginny had given them.

Professor Dumbledore gave them a selection of chocolate frogs each, while Professor McGonagall gave them two books, "Hogwarts, a history" for Hermione and an larger book for Harry.

"I know it seems strange for Harry to have a bigger book, but it is a history of wizarding families, including the Potters. I'm afraid it doesn't mention your parents," she explained, "as it was published before they were born."

Madam Pomfrey gave them a bottle of potion each. "This is a variation on the dreamless sleep potion, so you mustn't use it often, but it gives you happy dreams, or happy daydreams if you take it when you are awake..."

"...So no taking it just before lessons," Professor Flitwick warned, laughing, then he gave them each a wand holder, which they immediately tried on.

Remus looked to Hermione. "This belonged to Harry's mother," he said, his voice almost breaking with emotion. "She gave it to me to take care of. She said I'd know when to pass it on." He pulled out a necklace. "May I?" He went behind Hermione and fastened it around her neck.

"It's beautiful," exclaimed Mrs. Granger.

"It must be worth a fortune," said Mr. Granger. "You shouldn't have."

"It's not mine to give," said Remus, "and the real value is in the charms it contains."

"It's magical?" asked Hermione.

"Yes. It contains charms to boost your magical power, and some protective charms as well."

Remus found himself smothered in a grateful Hermione-hug. He didn't release her, though, before whispering some beautiful words into her ear: "Please do take good care of him."

Hermione felt tears coming to her eyes as Remus turned back to Harry, he pulled another package from his clothing. "And now you, Harry. This isn't worth as much, but..." he handed Harry a photo album. "Open it later," he suggested. "It's a copy of all the photos I had from the years your parents and I were at Hogwarts together, plus a few from afterwards."

Harry was too emotional to reply, so Hermione thanked him.

After Mr. Granger had run the shuttle service back home, Mrs. Granger had insisted that they all stay for coffee. Molly Weasley almost had to drag her husband into the floo, but after many excited goodbyes, the Grangers and Harry were finally on their own again.

"Did you enjoy the party, Harry?" asked Hermione.

"Yes, thank you," he replied politely. "Did you?"

"I really did." She noticed a slight frown on Harry's face and asked him, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," he replied, "I just didn't like Ron much."

"He was rude," agreed Hermione, "and mean to his sister."

"Hermione, Harry," said Mr. Granger. "I was talking with Mr. Weasley. He apologised for Ron's behaviour. Apparently he finds it really hard being the youngest brother. All his older brothers outshine him, not to mention using him as a target for pranks."

"Don't they prank Ginny?" asked Hermione.

"Yes, but not so much. Apparently she's too good at revenge."

"So?" asked Harry.

"I just want you both to be patient with Ron."

Harry nodded.

"Now, have you done your mind exercises today?"

"No, we haven't," admitted Hermione.

"Go on then. Do them for a little while, then come down to relax. It's school tomorrow."

Hermione's face brightened and the two children raced upstairs.

They still weren't sure that they were doing any better on their mind exercises, and this time they didn't need reminding not to overdo them. Hermione was almost as eager as Harry to see his photo album once they'd finished the exercises.

Afterwards, they used more of the dreamless sleep potion so they'd be fresh for their first morning back at school.

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Author's note...

Sorry for the delay on this chapter. I managed to step on a rusty nail, and despite antibiotics and painkillers, I've been in pain all weekend.

Typing with your leg propped up as high as you can get it is a little impractical.

Thanks to omega13a for alerting me so quickly that I'd left an editing note in the text in the previous chapter, enabling me to remove it before most readers saw it.

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez. Especially for his quick turn-rounds which minimised the delay.

Please review,

Brian

## The Harmony bond, chapter eighteen.

### Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

# = See note at the end of the chapter.

In the previous chapter...

Hermione's 9th birthday party which she shared with Harry They met Ginny and Ron Weasley.

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It came as no surprise to Jean Granger that her daughter was up early. "Come on, Harry," she could be heard calling, "we don't want to be late for school."

She couldn't make out Harry's muffled response, but formed the impression that he was not happy at being woken.

Deciding to interrupt the two children before World War III broke out, she knocked and went into their room. "Calm down, Hermione, you've got plenty of time." She was amused to see that Hermione was already washed and dressed. She briefly wondered if her daughter had been distracted enough to fully undress in front of Harry, but quickly dismissed the thought from her head.

"But Harry hasn't tried on his uniform yet!"

"I took down his sizes myself. I think he'll manage without you watching him. Now leave the boy in peace for a while."

They were eating breakfast when Harry came downstairs, still yawning. Mrs. Granger smiled approvingly. She had got his sizes

right. "Now, I'm taking you both today, so I can introduce Harry to his class teacher."

Thanks to Hermione, after they'd cleared up from breakfast, they still had nearly half an hour before they had to leave for school. Hermione wanted to practice their mind exercises again, but her mother said firmly, "Not before Harry's first day at school."

So Hermione opened the chess set that Ron had given her and took out the booklet explaining the rules and began to read it.

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Harry was nervous as they approached the school. School didn't have many happy memories for him. Hermione's obvious excitement wasn't actually making him feel any better. So when his new class teacher seemed rather cool and distant, he thought nothing of it.

"As we have a new boy in class today," she began, once they were settled into class, "I thought we'd start with a quiz." There was a general groan and Harry thought that was a great way to make him unpopular. Just what he needed.

The class was divided into two and he was on the opposite team from Hermione. Each time they answered a question correctly they were given one point.

He noticed that Hermione's hand went up for almost every question, but the teacher never asked her. When nobody could answer "Why does ice float on top of water?", Hermione's was the only raised hand, but the teacher still ignored her.

Harry put up his hand.

"Yes, Harry?"

"Why don't you ask Hermione? She seems to know." he asked, ignoring the cross looks from his team-mates.



After giving him a flat stare, the teacher turned to Hermione and sighed, "Hermione?"

"Because when water freezes it expands to fill much more space which makes it less dense than water and is why pipes can burst when they freeze..."

The teacher cut her off. "That's enough. Just ice is lighter than water would have been enough."

When the teacher went on to the next question, Harry burst out, "But you didn't give her a point and she was right." He didn't actually know whether Hermione was right, but knowing Hermione and seeing the teacher's reaction, he was pretty sure she'd been right.

Some of the boys in the class sneered, "Oh, Hermione's got a boyfriend."

"That's enough," the teacher snapped. "Ten minute time-out for interrupting. Harry, stand in the corner. Water only expands eight per cent when it freezes, which is hardly much more space."

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When they had playtime, he noticed Hermione creep out alone, and finally found her in a corner of the playground, sitting on the ground with the booklet on chess Ron had given her with her chess set.

"Hi," he said, uncertainly.

"Hi."

"Is she always like that?"

Hermione nodded. "She says nobody likes a know-it-all."

"But it wasn't fair. You knew the answers to all the questions."

"Not all of them."

"Most of them."

Hermione just shrugged.

"I can't understand why you like school," Harry said. "This one's almost as bad as my one was."

"I like learning things, and she's not so bad when we're on our own. She does bring me books to read she thinks I might be interested in." She looked up. "You'd better go."

"Why?"

"Hey! Four-eyes. Yes, you! You don't want to hang around with the mad scientist."

"She's not mad," shouted Harry, standing up, ignoring Hermione's quiet "Don't, Harry."

"She is too. And you'll catch something. She's evil. She gave me the lurgy." #

"Don't you say that!"

"And who's gonna stop me?" The boy who has spoken pushed Harry hard, so that he fell on top of Hermione.

"What's this you're reading, Mad?" He snatched the booklet from Hermione's hands and walked off with his mates.

Harry got up and tried to get it back. "Harry, leave it!" pleaded Hermione, but Harry chased after the retreating boys.

"Give it back! It's Hermione's."

The boy turned around and punched him in the stomach making him bend over, while one of his mates hit him on the face. Another pushed him to the ground and kicked his leg.

He heard Hermione scream and then a shout, "Stop that at once!"

The boys ran off.

"Fighting on your first day?" said the teacher. Just his luck, it was their class teacher.

"They started on him," said Hermione. "Do you really think he's going to attack three of them?"

The teacher nodded. "Don't worry, you aren't in trouble, Harry. Hermione, are you okay to walk him to the nurse?"

Before Hermione could answer, Harry remembered, "My glasses!"

The teacher picked them up. "They're broken I'm afraid." Giving them to him, she added, "When you get the bill for repairing them, bring it in and I'll send it to their parents."

Harry looked surprised for a moment, then said "They took Hermione's book."

The teacher smiled down at him. "Don't worry, Harry. I'll deal with them. Are you okay to walk to the nurse?"

Harry replied, "Yeah."

"Go on, then. And both of you, don't worry if you are late for the next class."

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The school nurse was brisk. "Hmm." She quickly cleaned the cut on his face, then told him "Take off your trousers so I can clean your knee properly." Turning to Hermione she said, "Wait outside."

"Tore your trousers. What your mother's going to say, I don't know."

"My mother's dead."

"Oh. I'm sorry. Now, this may hurt a bit." The yellowish liquid she cleaned his grazed knee with did sting, but nothing much. "Okay. You can get dressed now. Are you all right everywhere else?"

"Yes, thank you."

The nurse smiled. "A boy with manners. That's unusual." Seeing his reaction she added, "Don't worry, I'm just teasing. Are you all right to go back to class?"

"Yes."

"Go on, then. Remember, no running in the corridors."

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When he and Hermione got back to class, Harry found that his seat had been moved next to Hermione and away from the boys who had bullied him. The class was strangely quiet.

The rest of the day was uneventful. Most others seemed to avoid him like they did Hermione, so they had no further problems.

"Can you manage without glasses?" Hermione had asked him.

"Yeah. They aren't much good anyway, and Dudley was always breaking them." #

"We'll have to get Mum to take you to the optician's."

At the end of school for the day, the teacher said, "Hermione? Harry? Can you stay a moment, please?"

"Yes, Miss Collier," said Hermione.

When the others had gone, Miss Collier asked Harry, "Are you all right now?"

"Yes, thank you."

"I've written to the three boys parents asking them to come and see me and the headmistress. Please let me know if they bother you again. I won't have bullying."

She handed Hermione the booklet they'd taken. "I'm sorry, it's rather torn."

"It's okay."

"How did you like the book I gave you before you were away?"

Hermione grinned. "It's brilliant. I thought it was going to be silly at first, but it's really good."

"Good. When you've finished The Hobbit, I can lend you the Lord of the Rings if you like. That's the book which follows it, and is rather more advanced reading, but I think you'd like it."

"Thank you, Miss Collier."

Miss Collier turned to Harry. "I'm sorry you had such a bad first day."

"It was okay, the rest of it, I mean." He hesitated. "Miss Collier?"

"Yes, Harry?"

"Why do you ignore Hermione in class?"

The teacher's face saddened for a moment. "Harry. I don't have to tell you that Hermione is extremely clever. I know she could answer almost every question, but if I asked her, the others would be jealous. It's not easy being brilliant."

With that, she got up, indicating the conversation was at an end.

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When they got home, Mrs. Granger almost drove Harry mad mothering him over the cut on his lip and the graze on his knee. "I'm okay, really," he had protested to no avail.

Hermione noticed that his protests were rather half-hearted and guessed, correctly, that he was rather enjoying the attention.

Harry was finally rescued by the arrival of Remus through the floo. "Tough first day?" he asked.

"It was okay."

"So I see," he grinned.

"Sorry, but we were just going out," Mrs. Granger apologised. "Harry's glasses were broken and we have to get some new ones."

Remus gave a hard look at Harry, then said simply, "Can you give them to me?"

Harry went to get his glasses and handed them to Remus, who put them on the table. Pulling out his wand he lightly tapped it on the glasses and said, "Reparo". The cracks in the glasses disappeared instantly. He handed them back to Harry. "That okay?"

"Fine. Thank you."

"We'll still take you to an optician on Saturday," Mrs. Granger said. "It's time we had your eyes checked." Turning to Remus, she asked, "Don't take this the wrong way, but why have you come today? I thought they didn't have a lesson until tomorrow evening?"

"I had to come and see how my best friends' son got on in his first day back at school, didn't I?"

Hermione snorted.

Remus and Mrs. Granger both looked confused at the sudden hostility from the girl.

"If you were such a good friend, why didn't you go to see him all those years?"

"Hermione!" said Mrs. Granger in a warning tone.

Remus put up a hand to stop her. "No. They have a right to know. Hermione, Harry's parents were two of the most amazing friends a man can have. Lily saw good in me when nobody else did."

"Then why?"

"I am a werewolf. Do you know what that is?"

Hermione nodded, but looked shocked

Remus smiled. "Been reading, I see."

"Can you explain for those of us who haven't read everything there is to read?" asked Mrs. Granger, noting that Harry looked as confused as she felt.

"A werewolf is someone who turns into a wolf on the night of the full moon. He becomes dangerous and would kill even his best friends."

"Werewolves really exist?" asked Mrs. Granger. "I thought they were just in stories!"

Hermione rolled her eyes at her mother, while Remus grimaced and replied,. "I wish they were. I was bitten by a werewolf when I was a young child, that's how you become one. That made me an outcast in the wizarding world..."

"But that's not fair," exclaimed Hermione.

"No, it isn't. But that's how it is. Dumbledore took a huge chance and allowed me to go to Hogwarts. Every month, around the night of the full moon, I had to be locked in a safe building. Even with Dumbledore's support, I didn't want to go on living." He paused sadly. "Your mother, Harry, saw me as something more than just a monster, and for that I can never repay her. Your father and his friends learned

to turn themselves into animals, so they could be with me on my transformation nights."

"Into animals?" gasped Harry.

"Yes, Harry. And don't even think about it. It's dangerous, but they took the risk to help me."

"So why didn't you help Harry?" Hermione asked again.

"Dumbledore might have believed in me, but the rest of the wizarding world thought I was a monster. I knew Dumbledore had hidden Harry away safely. He told me that the wards protecting Harry would be weakened by the presence of another wizard, even if just visiting. And what could I offer you, Harry? I can't get a job, most people treat me as a freak." The distress on the man's face was evident. "Harry, if I'd known..."

"It's okay."

"No, Harry, it's far from okay. But at least I can try to help you both now. If you still want me to come?" He was looking up at Mrs. Granger.

Ignoring the pleading looks from both Hermione and Harry, Mrs. Granger said, "But you said you could be a danger to them."

"Only when there is a full moon, and I stay locked away then. I can assure you that the rest of the time, I am perfectly safe."

Mrs. Granger appeared to be thinking. Hermione opened her mouth as if to say something, but Remus shook his head at her.

Finally, Mrs. Granger nodded. "If you're sure it's safe. You probably saved their lives calling in Madam Pomfrey when you did. If that doesn't give you the right to be trusted, I don't know what would."

Remus gulped with emotion. "Thank you, Mrs. Granger."



"Is that why Professor Flitwick said you were ill the weekend we came back from Hogwarts?"

Remus smiled, "No, the full moon isn't until this weekend coming. I just had a bad dose of the flu. Even wizards get it sometimes. And now, having checked on the pup, I must be going."

He flooed away, just as Harry said, "He called me a pup!"

"Maybe you're barking mad," quipped Hermione.

"You're the one who's supposed to be mad," Harry joked back.

Even in a joke, his comment hit home for a second and she looked sad. "Come on," she said, forcing a smile. "Time we did our exercises."

They went upstairs to the room they were now sharing. "Before we do them," asked Harry, "Do you think we could send Hedwig with a thank you note to the Weasleys for coming yesterday?"

Hermione smiled. She knew Harry had been dying to use Hedwig since she'd bought him for him, but she was worried, "Do you think she's old enough to carry messages yet?"

The small white owl squawked at her and gave her a funny look.

"I think she's telling me off," she exclaimed, and immediately got up to get a pen and a piece of paper.

Harry hesitated. "I.. er.."

"What's wrong?"

Harry seemed to be deciding whether to say anything. She was disappointed by his reply of "Nothing."

Harry seemed to be having difficulty writing.

"Harry?"

"Can't write well," he muttered. He recoiled slightly from the horrified look on Hermione's face. "I got in trouble if I did better in school than Dudley," he defended himself.

Hermione looked distraught. "I'm sorry, Harry. I thought you couldn't write today because of your glasses. Would you like me to write the letter?"

"Please?"

After writing a short note she rolled it up. "Now the man in the shop said, you put this band here around the owl's leg, then put the note in it." She nervously reached for Hedwig's leg, hoping she wouldn't peck her. To her surprise the little owl held out her leg and Hermione carefully slid the band up the offered leg. Her worries about it coming loose were needless as, like their gloves, it shrank to the correct size.

She gave Harry the note to put into the band, grateful for the smile that appeared on his face as he did so. A moment later, Hedwig was flapping at the window to leave, so Harry opened it and they watched the white bird for a few seconds before they couldn't see her any more.

"I can help you with your writing," Hermione offered hesitantly, "if you want."

Harry nodded.

"Good. Now there's so much to do. We have school, training with Flitwick, or Remus, or the Weasleys. Professor Dumbledore is coming once a week, then we have to practice our mind exercises. Now there's writing too. I'll have to make a timetable..." She stopped at the amused look on Harry's face and lightly punched his arm for teasing her.

When he winced slightly, she gasped, "Sorry, was your arm bruised today as well?"

"Nothing much," he replied.

Hermione suddenly became serious. "Thank you for today."

Harry looked puzzled.

"I've never had someone stand up for me before."

"I didn't do very well," he replied.

Hermione looked like she was about to cry, so he said the only thing he could think of to distract her. "Shouldn't we do our mind exercises now?"

Her eagerness to practice something immediately overcame her emotions and she said, "You first tonight?"

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Author's notes...

#The British slang word "Lurgy" (or "lurgi") is often used in the context of playground games, where lurgi is often used as a phantom contagion or unclean quality, in a manner similar to the North American concept of cooties. For example, "You can't play with us, you've got the lurgi!" could be used when excluding another child from a group. The word appears in Half Blood Prince, used by Luna Lovegood...

"I could hear the match commentary from here," said Ron, his voice now shaking with laughter. "I hope Luna always commentates from now on... Loser's Lurgy..." (HBP19)

#Basic (and usually ugly) glasses for children are free on the National Health Service.

#Why Mr. and Mrs. Granger and not Dr. when they are dentists? Even the HPLexicon gets this wrong. Dentists are more correctly known as Dental Surgeons. Surgeons in Britain are known as Mr. (or

Mrs.) NOT Doctor. Junior doctors are still Dr. even if they specialise in surgery.

Minor corrections (mostly typos) have been upload to chapters 3, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, 17 as well as deleting the reference to the Discovery Channel in chapter 3 as satellite TV only started in the UK in 1989 and had only four channels at that time and chapter 3 was set in July 1988.

Sorry to add more angst, but the scene at school was important.

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

Please review,

Brian

# The Harmony bond, chapter nineteen.

### Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

# First day at School!

[illegible]

Even though they hadn't taken the potion, as they couldn't take it too often, Harry had no trouble at all getting to sleep. The excitement of the day had worn him out.

Hermione finally got fed up trying to get to sleep and went back downstairs to join her parents.

"Can't sleep?" her mother asked.

Hermione shook her head.

"Did something happen at school today? You were both a little evasive earlier."

Hermione nodded and looked embarrassed. She didn't notice the silent communication between her parents.

"Come here," her father said gently. When she was close enough, he pulled her onto his lap and let her lay against his arm.

"I'm too big for this," she protested.

"You'll never be too big for this," he insisted.

Sensing this was difficult for her daughter, Jean put aside her own curiosity and said, "Why don't you tell your daddy all about it, while I go and make you some nice hot chocolate?"

Hermione looked at her gratefully and Jean knew she'd made the right decision. David would tell her later and right now Hermione just needed to be daddy's little girl again.

"So what's so secret? Did you go around turning all the teachers' hair blue?" They had all laughed when Harry had told them about that incident.

Hermione giggled at the thought, "Da-ad, of course we didn't."

"Then what happened to make you so pensive?"

"Harry got in a fight." She felt her father tense up. "It wasn't his fault."

"Is he okay?"

"Yeah, it was nothing much."

"Then why the long face?"

"He was defending me."

"Some bully attacked you?"

"No, they were just making fun of me as usual and Harry wouldn't let them."

David felt his heart wrench at the casual way she spoke of her being made fun of 'as usual', but knew that right now, that wasn't what she was focussing on.

"So he defended you. That's good, isn't it?"

Hermione didn't answer.

"Hermione?"

To his surprise, his daughter just burst into tears. At a loss to understand why, he just held her close.

He was still mystified when his wife walked in, and gave her a bewildered look.

"It doesn't take being a mind-reader to understand," she said. "How many times has she come home crying after someone she'd thought was a friend either started avoiding her or joined in the teasing? I think she's just overwhelmed that suddenly she's had someone stand up for her."

"Am I that useless?" he asked her.

"No, you're just a man, and right now she needs her daddy."

David Granger felt a little better at that.

Hermione's crying stopped as quickly as it had started.

"Feel better?" David asked his daughter.

Hermione nodded.

"It sounds like you have a boyfriend," he teased her.

Hermione wrinkled her nose. "Don't be silly."

"But he's a good friend, am I right?"

Hermione nodded her agreement.

"Drink your hot chocolate, then it's back to bed."

Jean handed Hermione the mug. "Don't worry, it's not too hot to drink."

When Hermione had drunk it, her father said, "Come on, young lady." With a struggle, he stood up, still holding Hermione in his arms. "Let's get you to bed. Mummy can come and tuck you in."

After her parents had whispered good night to her, careful not to wake Harry, Hermione still lay awake, thinking. She knew that Harry must have known the unwritten rules at school. He'd been bullied often enough. You don't defend someone who the others are picking on, or they'll pick on you next. Other so-called friends had known that too, and left her alone to her tormentors. But Harry had defended her, both in the playground and in class too.

She realised with a guilty twinge that she'd been wrong about him. She'd thought of him, and treated him, as some poor little boy she could take pity on. Their bond had complicated things, so she couldn't only see him as a project, but he still had looked down on him as someone to pity. She still did pity him, with his history, who in their right mind wouldn't? But he was more than a victim. She wasn't even sure how she felt now.

She thought about what Professor Dumbledore had said about death-eaters and Voldemort coming back to get Harry. She might have dismissed it, but it was very obvious that all the others thought of the threat as a very real thing and were just as worried for Harry as the old man was.

"If he does come back," she whispered the vow to her sleeping friend, "he'll have to get through me first. I will protect you with my life if I have to."

[illegible]

Harry was surrounded, trying desperately not to cry as they laughed at him and pointed, calling him names. A girl he'd thought was a friend had even splashed something on his uniform's skirt while calling him an ugly, boring know-it-all, and he couldn't stop thinking on what could he do so he didn't have to come home and have Mum try to wash away the stain. He refused to give them the satisfaction of tears. That would only make them worse. The tears would come later.



Someone was prodding him and he woke up to see Hermione's shocked face in front of him. "Harry, did you...?" The rest went unsaid.

He nodded, almost as shocked as she was.

Hermione looked embarrassed. "I..." she began with difficulty, "I guess we should be pleased, right?"

"Right."

"So it's okay."

"Yeah."

Hermione didn't look pleased. "I mean, my memories aren't as bad as yours..."

Suddenly Harry realised why she was embarrassed. Compared to some of the bullying he'd experienced, this was nothing, yet it had still upset her. She was scared he'd think she was silly.

"Hermione," he said, desperately searching for words which would help. Unable to think of any, he said simply, "It really is okay."

She looked at him uncertainly. "Okay."

It took them some time to get back to sleep, especially Hermione. This was what they'd been trying to do, but she felt so ashamed, so exposed.

Once he was asleep again, Harry found himself looking for the wall Dumbledore had described and the door through which he had entered earlier. The first time, the wall had seemed to react to his presence, growing higher and stretching out into the distance. It had taken him a while to find the front door and some time to push it open. This second time he found the front door almost at once and it opened more easily.

As he found his way into her memories again, Harry wasn't sure how to describe the sensation. One moment he was watching Hermione, another moment, like the first time, it seemed like he was Hermione in these dreams. But all the time, he could feel how she felt. Was this what it was like for her, in his dreams? And she STILL wanted him as a friend?

Knowing that made him bolder. He wanted to know her. He began seeking out memories.

The constant daily torment of the name calling and occasional physical attacks he knew she hadn't even told her parents about. Nothing like what he had experienced, simply being pushed to the ground, or her pocket money stolen, or her pen, or being slapped by other girls, and the pretending to her parents that she'd just fallen over...

The despair as so-called friends left her either sometimes they didn't want to be teased as well, but more often simply because they'd just decided that she was too boring to be friends with...

And worst of all, teachers who didn't care, who ignored the bullying, even ignoring the jibes made against her in class, sometimes adding a barbed comment of their own.

A thought about Voldemort? What was THAT doing here? When he tried to see it was almost as if a wall pushed him away, before he forced his way through it. He was Hermione. She was looking at him, her face close to his, whispering, as she swore to protect him with her life...

Harry awoke with a start, and looked at the sleeping girl beside him. He knew without a doubt that she had meant every word. Putting his arm around her, he also swore an oath. "I won't let him get you, I promise."

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Back in Hermione's mind again, Harry wondered if he could find some happy dreams. They were easy to find, so many times with her parents. He wondered for a moment what it was like to have parents that were happy you were there, were proud of you, then pushed the self-pitying thought away. So this was what a family should be like. There was teasing, but it was with affection. A lot of hugs, a HUGE lot of hugs, and even more, just the warm sensation of being together.

Angrily he thought, this was what Voldemort had stolen from him. This was what he should have had. For the first time, he thought of the future. This was the future he wanted, and nobody was going to take it from him. Nobody.

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At breakfast, both children were quiet, but Jean Granger could see they looked different somehow, but she didn't trust herself to ask them about it. Hedwig had returned with a brief note from Molly Weasley saying that they had all been happy to see them both.

After Harry and Hermione had gone to school, Jean Granger went upstairs. She felt stupid for talking to an owl, but asked, "Could you take a message for me? I don't know how you do it."

Hedwig simply put out her leg. When Jean didn't seem to understand, Hedwig pulled on the band with her beak. "Oh, wait," Jean told her, "I have to write it first." After she'd written the note, rolled it up and placed it in the band around Hedwig's leg, she'd said, "Don't lose it," only to be rewarded with a look that made her feel about two inches tall.

"It's for Madam Pomfrey at Hogwarts. Do you know where that is?" Another one of "those" looks. "Okay, I guess you'll find her." She opened the window and Hedwig flew away. Jean watched her until she disappeared into a cloud.

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Harry's second day at school had been uneventful, though both he and Hermione were a little puzzled by the absence of the three boys who had attacked Harry the day before.

Miss Collier had been carefully monitoring her newest pupil all of his second day, and noted how he just seemed to be behind in all subjects. After a quick consultation with Hermione before playtime, she had asked Harry to stay behind for a word after one class.

"Yes, Miss Collier?"

"I've noticed you are rather behind in your school work."

Harry looked ashamed.

"I hope you don't mind, but I asked Hermione if she knew why. She told me about your cousin, and you being scared to be better than him. I know she's going to help you catch up. Would you like me to help you too? Perhaps after school some days?"

"Yes, please," Harry answered quietly.

"Good. I'll speak to Hermione's parents to make sure it's okay for you to stay late some days, all right?"

Harry nodded and began to walk away, then stopped and turned back. "Miss Collier?"

"Yes, Harry?"

Harry hesitated. He knew what he wanted to say, but was having trouble finding the words, or the nerve.

"Can I help you?" she prompted him.

"It's just..." Harry summoned up all the nerve he can find. "I wish you'd be nicer to Hermione in class."

Miss Collier raised an eyebrow. Whatever she'd expected him to say, that wasn't it.

"I've explained to Hermione that if I treat her in class as I do when we are alone together, it would only make things worse with the others. She understands, even if you don't."

"Then why does she cry so much at home? She cries a lot about school, but most of all when you've said something..." Harry had only ever seen her crying about school at home in her memories, but he didn't mention that part.

Miss Collier felt a knot in her throat. She'd had no idea. Realising that Harry was expecting some kind of reply, she said simply, "I'll try to do better."

As Harry walked away, she added, "And Harry, thank you for telling me."

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"What did she want?" Hermione asked.

"She going to give me extra lessons to help me catch up," Harry replied.

"That's great," said Hermione excitedly.

Harry almost laughed. Only Hermione could be excited about extra lessons.

"I can't wait to tell Mum," she finished.

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When they arrived home from school, Madam Pomfrey was waiting for them. "I just want to give you both a check-up," she assured them. "Hermione first."

She made Hermione stand in front of her as she waved her wand over Hermione's body in a sort of zig-zag manner. She made no comment. "Now Harry."

Again, no comment came from the mediwitch. "Now together. Hold hands if you please."

Madam Pomfrey's expression changed into an enormous smile.

"Well?" asked Jean Granger.

"I don't know what's been happening," she replied, "but all of a sudden the bond is as strong as it should be at this stage. It's still forming, of course, but you've come a long way. Well done, both of you."

At that point, she was interrupted by the arrival of Remus. "I can come back later if it's inconvenient," he offered.

Madam Pomfrey replied, "No. I'm finished here. I was just telling them the bond is at the stage it should be."

"Really?" asked Remus, obviously staggered at the news.

"I just did what Professor Dumbledore said, about looking for the door, and this time I found it," explained Harry. He didn't mention that he suspected that, finally, Hermione had decided to LET him find it.

"He'll be pleased," Madam Pomfrey commented. "Now make sure you continue your mind exercises, though you'll probably find them easier and easier now, until they become second nature. Now I'll leave you to your other training."

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Miss Collier stopped the car. Yes. This was the right address. Walking up to the front door, she was about to ring the bell, but she heard a noise. Obviously they were in the back garden. They

probably wouldn't hear the bell. She hoped they would mind her walking round the back.

What she saw as she reached the rear of the house was a man. He seemed to be holding some sort of weapon, pointing at Harry and Hermione.

Before she could cry out a flash of light went from whatever the man was holding and just as quickly a huge orange disc appeared in front of Harry and Hermione and the flash disappeared. It seemed like something out of Star Wars had come to life.

Her gasp made the other turn towards her and she saw their shocked faces probably matched her own. "Hermione?" she asked, before feeling her legs giving way as everything went black.

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Author's note...

I now have a Yahoo group – see my profile or go to groups dot yahoo dor com slash (not THAT type of slash!) group slash brigrove

The group will tell you how the next chapter is progressing, but as well as discussions on my stories, feel free to use it for fic searches. And thanks to all those that helped me find the story I asked about (before I deleted the request from the chapter due to so many responses!)

Just a reminder to everyone that when I upload a new chapter I also re-upload the previous chapter with any corrections that were needed.

Thank you to Wonderbee31 and jabarber69 and snapehermionelover for pointing out that Hedwig is a SHE not a he. After getting reminded three times in the first few reviews, I reposted the chapter with that corrected rather than waiting to do it when I uploaded this chapter as I usually do.

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

Please review,

Brian



The Harmony bond, chapter twenty.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

They dream Hermione's dreams for the first time and Miss Collier pays a visit

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To Hermione, it seemed for a moment as if everything stood still. Then she let out a scream. Remus had reacted more quickly than she would have believed possible, moving to catch Miss Collier as she fell, even so she almost hit her head on the gatepost as she fell.

Hermione's scream brought her mother running. "Oh my God, what happened?"

"It's okay, Mrs. Granger," Remus hurried assured her. "Some woman came in your back garden and fainted."

"But isn't that...?"

"Yes, Mum. It's Miss Collier," Hermione confirmed.

"What is she doing here?"

"I think she came about me," Harry offered.

"Why?"

Harry looked embarrassed. "She wanted to give me extra lessons."

At her mother's puzzled look, Hermione snapped, "Thanks to being at the Dursleys, he wasn't allowed to be better in school than that idiot

Dudley, so he's really behind. What does it matter why she's here? She saw us doing magic. What are we going to do?"

During this conversation, Mrs. Granger had led Remus, who had been carrying Miss Collier, into the lounge and he had sat the woman in an armchair.

He answered Hermione, "I'm sure you know the law. She must be obliviated."

"Obliviated?" asked Mrs. Granger.

"He means, her memory wiped," Hermione explained. "Professor Dumbledore did it in the hospital, remember?"

"Oh, that's what he did."

"Yes, and it's not right."

"Why?" asked Remus, genuinely confused by the girl's objections.

"Who gave wizards the right to take away someone's memory, just because they are a muggle?"

"Hermione. If the muggles knew about us, they'd want magical solutions for all their problems. More importantly, many of them would see us as a threat. Either way would eventually lead to war. It has, in the past, which is why the law was made, not just here, but all over the world."

"But she's my friend."

"And how do you think she would cope with knowing about you? It doesn't matter, the law is the law."

"I read about werewolves," Hermione said suddenly. "Before breakfast this morning. Do you think the law is fair?"

"Of course not, but the most recent werewolf law is just British and based on prejudice. The law concerning the secrecy of the Magical world hails back from the Renaissance, and its acceptance is world-wide and for good reason."

The teacher in question began to stir and Remus immediately cast a spell on her to put her back to sleep.

"That's what I mean!" Hermione cried.

"We're just muggles to you, aren't we?" said Mrs. Granger. "You didn't even think twice."

Remus was taken aback by the sudden hostility, but eventually sighed. "As I remember the text of the law, you are direct family to a witch, so the law makes exception of you unless you become a liability under the terms the same law dictates. I don't quite remember, but the law is pretty straight-forward that as long as you don't disclose what you know of wizard kind, you are okay."

"Hermione," Mrs. Granger said. "What is this law? Do you know anything about it?"

"I think it's mentioned in the Wizard and Witches handbook," she replied and dashed upstairs to get it.

When she came back downstairs, she explained, "It's something they give to teenagers, to know what they can and can't do once they are of age, like, you can apparate, but only if you've got a licence. There's a section on how to treat muggles."

"Is there?" huffed her mother.

"Yes," said Hermione, missing the offended note in her mother's voice. "here we are..."

"In the event of a magical occurrence witnessed by a muggle and said muggle is not of the complete confidence of the wizards or witches present, any wizard or witch must notify the Ministry at once, who will dispatch an obliviation team."

Remus looked satisfied, if not pleased, until Hermione added, "That's means it's against the law for you to obliviate her. You have to call in the Ministry."

"But we can't," Remus protested. "Harry's location is secret."

"It seems that you break the law whatever you do," Mrs. Granger pointed out. "So perhaps you shouldn't do anything."

"I'll have to call Professor Dumbledore," he sighed. "He wanted to come and see them about the bond later anyway."

They heard Remus explain the situation over the floo. Professor Dumbledore came a few minutes later. To their surprise, Madam Pomfrey and Professor Flitwick were with him. "Hello, Harry, Hermione, Mrs. Granger. Before we discuss the little problem with your teacher, Madam Pomfrey has told me the good news about your bonding." He gave a nod to Professor Flitwick.

"Hermione, Harry, all the books tell us that those who are bonded find it difficult to talk about their bond to others, but we'd really like to know why you think it changed so much, so quickly."

At the somewhat startled expressions from the two children, Madam Pomfrey explained, "It was my idea for us all to come this evening. I hoped it would be easier only having to explain it once. It might help us treat anyone else who is having trouble with a bond forming."

The adults present noticed a look go between the two children. Harry gave a slight nod and Hermione began. "I think it was the fight at school that did it."

"Fight?" asked Madam Pomfrey, concerned at once.

"It wasn't anything much," said Harry.

"Go on," Professor Flitwick encouraged them.

"Well some boys were calling me names as usual and took what I was reading. Harry tried to get it back and they started hitting him. The teacher stopped it..."

"I should hope so," huffed Madam Pomfrey.

"It's just that..." Hermione seemed to be searching for the words.

"Nobody's ever stood up for Hermione before," explained her mother.

"So what happened after that?" asked Professor Dumbledore.

"Last night, I could suddenly feel Harry in my mind. I didn't like it," she admitted, "but I knew he wouldn't hurt me. He... he saw me crying over something silly..."

"It wasn't silly," Harry argued.

"I thought he'd think I was stupid, crying over something like that, but he didn't, so I let him see more."

"The bond has strengthened in both of you," said Madam Pomfrey. "Can you explain that, Harry?"

"Not really," he answered her, feeling awkward.

"I'm sorry to pry, Harry, but this is important," Professor Dumbledore insisted.

Hermione answered instead, blushing bright red as she did so. "He saw me saying Voldemort would have to get past me to kill Harry."

Hermione kept her eyes away from her mother.

"That's enough," said Madam Pomfrey. "Thank you, Hermione, Harry. I'm not quite sure how that will help others, but it explains what has happened."

"Should we still go our mind exercises?" Hermione asked.

"Yes," replied Professor Dumbledore. "Practice helping each other building walls, and trying to break through them. But remember, only a few minutes at a time. Professor Flitwick, Mr. Lupin, I'd like you both to continue their training. It can only help to reinforce the bond."

There was a note of dismissal in his voice and the others left, leaving only Remus and Professor Dumbledore with Harry and the Grangers.

"Now for our other problem."

"Are you going to call the Ministry?" Hermione asked him.

"No. I am not. My position in the Wizengamot authorises me to obliviate when necessary. But the real reason for the law to call in the Ministry is to ensure that only properly trained wizards and witches obliviate anyone. Done correctly, it may only wipe an instant or a topic worth of memories, so the only thing the person doesn't remember is the precise incident for which they need to be obliviated. Done incorrectly, it can cause... severe problems."

"So you are going to do it?" asked Mrs. Granger.

"Yes, I am."

"But she's my friend," objected Hermione.

"It doesn't matter that Hermione doesn't want her friend obliviated, or that I object to it in my own house, does it?"

"Mum," said Hermione, with a sudden look of understanding on her face, "if it wasn't for our bond, he'd have obliviated all of us by now."

"Is what she said right?" cried Harry.

Professor Dumbledore's face gave it's own answer.

"But what's our bond got to do with it?"

"It's dangerous to obliviate someone while a bond is forming," Hermione explained. "My book on bonding said so."

"I think it might be an idea if I read this book of yours," her mother said. "So. Where does that leave us?"

"I'm sorry," said Professor Dumbledore. "I have no choice. Obliviate. When she comes around shortly, she will only remember fainting, not why."

"So she's going to be worried about having blackouts now," said Mrs. Granger angrily. "You know, Professor, for some reason you want these children's trust. I think you just went a long way to losing it again."

"He's not interested in me," said Hermione bluntly. "Except that I am bonded to Harry. Harry's important somehow, I know it. And I mean to find out why." She gave a challenging look to Professor Dumbledore.

"We should go, before she wakes up," said Remus.

Professor Dumbledore muttered a spell over the still-unconscious teacher. "Now she has a lump on her head and a bruise on her, er, behind. She will also wake up with a stiff headache. You can tell her she slipped over and hit her head."

As the professor was about to step into the floo, Mrs. Granger called him back.

"Yes, Mrs. Granger?"

"I suspect that I can't control what you do about Harry, but I don't think you should assume that Hermione will be coming to Hogwarts, that's all."

"If Hermione doesn't go, I'm not going," said Harry. "He can't make me."

The Professor nodded. "You would do well to remember that laws are written with a 'why', not only with a 'how' in mind. Now, good evening to you all," he said.

Remus followed him a moment later.

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Almost as soon as Remus had disappeared, Miss Collier woke up with a start. While she didn't like it, Jean would play along. It would be easier than explaining about magic. "Are you all right? We were about to call an ambulance."

"My head hurts. What happened?"

"You slipped and fell. I think you bumped your head. You should probably see a doctor."

"How long was I out?"

"Only a minute or two."

"If it's all right with you, I'll get a taxi to the hospital, just to get checked over and leave the car parked here. I can pick it up on the way to school in the morning."

"Are you sure? I can run you to the hospital."

"That would be very kind, Mrs. Granger."

Hermione couldn't hold her curiosity any longer. "Why did you come?" she asked.

"I wanted to ask your parents if they minded Harry staying after school for some extra lessons to help him catch up."

"I don't mind at all, I'm sure we'd all be very grateful," said Mrs. Granger. "But you didn't have to trouble to come out here. Why didn't you just send a note?"

"I also wanted to see Hermione."

"Me?"



"I want to say I'm sorry, for the way I've treated you in class. Although I do have to give the others a chance, I've been going beyond that."

"It's okay, you explained why. I do understand."

"Hermione. Sometimes we can understand something up here," the teacher said, pointing at her head "but what we feel is different. I know you've been upset. I wish you had felt that you could tell me. You can tell me anything, you know?"

If Miss Collier noticed the sudden glances between the two children and Mrs. Granger, she didn't say anything about them.

"As I said to Harry earlier today, I will try to do better. Now, have you finished The Hobbit yet?"

"Almost."

"It's a good job I brought the next one then, Lord Of The Rings."

"Isn't that a little old for a nine-year old?" Mrs. Granger asked, only to receive a scathing look from her daughter. "Obviously not. Forget I said anything. Now, let's get out to the car so I can take Miss Collier to the hospital."

During the short journey to the hospital, Miss Collier asked Harry what subject he liked and what he thought he needed most help with. Harry wasn't really sure, but Hermione thought his writing should be first. Miss Collier agreed.

"Harry, are you sure you know what you are letting yourself in for, letting Hermione help you?" Mrs. Granger teased.

"Mu-um!" came the predictable response, along with a genuine chuckle from Harry.

Miss Collier was seen, checked over and released fairly quickly, possible head injuries being treated as a priority. But it was still late evening when they arrived home, having dropped off Miss Collier first.

"Mum, did you mean what you said about not going to Hogwarts?"

"Of course I did. There must be other schools. You could even go to a normal school instead."

Hermione would have normally made a comment to that, but the heat in her mother's reply told her that now was not the best time.

Mrs. Granger explained to her husband what had happened while she was cooking something for them all to eat and then shooed the two children to bed.

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The children were tired, so rather than do their exercises before getting into their bed, they did them under the covers. They both fell asleep holding on to opposite sides of the same red door.

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Nobody noticed till the morning a thick, leather-bound volume, sitting on the tea table, with a scarlet and gold feather sitting on top of it.

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Author's note...

Thanks to Myene for spotting a typo in chapter 12, now corrected. Also a mistake in chapter one of "An unexpected letter", also now corrected.

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

Please review,

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter twenty-one.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

Miss Collier was obliviated after a row between the Grangers and Professor Dumbledore.

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Despite the fact that the two children had obviously had a good night, breakfast in the kitchen had been a subdued affair. After Harry and Hermione had gone to school, Jean Granger had done the washing up and was quickly tidying the house before leaving to join her husband in their dental practice when she discovered the book, lying on the tea table in the lounge.

International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy

1692

94<sup>a</sup> revision: 1964

Frowning, she lay the feather aside, picked up the book, and a note fell out.

"Dear Mr. and Mrs. Granger and Hermione. Please forgive me for sending Fawkes with this book. As I said last night the law was written for good reason. I have borrowed this book from our History of Magic teacher. I hope it will help you to understand the reasons I had to act as I did. Please understand. There are times when even I have no choice."

\* \_  
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Sending the book had been the result of a frantic meeting the night before between Professor Dumbledore, Professors Flitwick and McGonagall, Madam Pomfrey and Remus.

"I seem to have offended the Grangers again," Professor Dumbledore began. "It seems that no matter what I do, I cannot earn their trust. Now Mrs. Granger is threatening to keep Hermione from school. Professor Flitwick, Madam Pomfrey, you've seen more of them than anybody. Do you think she was serious?"

"Albus, it would help if we knew what had happened," Professor Flitwick replied.

"Remus?" Professor Dumbledore nodded.

"A teacher saw us practising and fainted. Hermione objected to her teacher being obliviated. In fact she and her mother were angry even when I kept the teacher unconscious for longer so that I could call Professor Dumbledore."

"And when I obliviated her," Professor Dumbledore took up the story, "Mrs. Granger commented that I was quickly losing their trust and that she might consider not allowing Hermione to go to Hogwarts. Harry, of course, said that he wouldn't come without her."

"Sir, to be honest, it didn't help when you virtually admitted that if it wasn't for the bond, you would have obliviated them as well."

Professor Dumbledore sighed, his hands in a helpless gesture, but Remus hadn't finished. "Hermione was right, wasn't she?"

"About what?"

"That Harry is important somehow. That's why you're so worried about him not coming here.

"I'm sorry, Remus, there are some things I cannot answer."

"Albus. You don't have to bear the weight of the world alone, you know," said Professor McGonagall.

"Yes, Harry is important, Minerva. However, aside from me, only five people knew why. Two are dead, two are as good as dead, one I have managed to protect so far only because nobody else knows."

The tone of sad finality in his voice indicated that that subject was closed.

"Albus," said Madam Pomfrey. "You have to look at things from the Grangers' point of view. They still understand almost nothing of our world. They don't take things for granted that a wizarding family would, like you are a great hero that most of us would trust with our lives. To them you are the man who abandoned Harry to be abused and never checked on him. You are the man who nearly killed both Harry and their daughter by separating them. Now you have gone into their home, which traditionally Englishmen think of as their castle, and obliviated Hermione's teacher against their will. Did you even try to explain why?"

"I did," said Remus.

"That may make a difference in how they see you, Remus, but it's not the same as if it had been Albus. Now, Albus," Madam Pomfrey said, turning to him, "you can't rely on your position and reputation with Harry or the Grangers. You need to earn their trust."

"Do you think Mrs. Granger was serious about keeping Hermione from Hogwarts?" Professor McGonagall asked, frowning. "Would she do that?"

"If she doesn't feel Hermione is safe, of course she would," the mediwitch replied. "I'm not saying that she would necessarily keep Hermione away from the wizarding world, but it wouldn't be hard for them to find out that there are other wizarding schools she could be sent to."

"So what options do I have?" Professor Dumbledore asked heavily.

"There are charms you could use," said Professor Flitwick, "to make them more likely to trust you. You could only use them on the parents, not on Hermione. It would be too risky with the bond."

"You can't really be suggesting..." objected Madam Pomfrey, obviously appalled.

"No. Don't misunderstand me," Filius added quickly. "Albus asked what he could do. This is one option regardless of whether it is good or bad. Apart from the fact that it would be highly unethical, Hermione would never trust you again if she ever found out what you had done. But your biggest problem would be Harry."

"Harry?" Professor Dumbledore asked.

"Yes, Harry. You've seen how ready he already is to jump to Hermione's defence. Hermione at least wants to be able to respect authority, it's the way she's been brought up. With Harry there is no such desire."

"What do you mean?"

"Remember I told you that I hit Hermione with a stinging curse aimed at Harry, being fairly sure that she would try to protect him?"

"Yes."

"When I explained why to Mrs. Granger, she accepted the explanation, rather more readily than I had expected, to be honest," Filius admitted. "She had obviously spoken to Hermione as she was quite ready to accept me again the next day. Harry wasn't though. Even after Hermione explained why I'd done what I'd done, he was wary of me. The only reason he accepted me again was because Hermione did."

"Where does this leave us?" Dumbledore asked.

"Don't underestimate Harry is all I am saying," said Filius. "But for now, treat Hermione and the Grangers as people with whom you have to earn their trust."

"Albus," said Minerva McGonagall forcefully. "I go to meet parents of muggleborns all the time. They don't know our world, they don't know you. They don't have anything for which to respect you. Your titles mean nothing to them. Defeating Grindelwald means nothing to them." She smiled wryly, "Even your chocolate frog card means nothing to them. You need to explain why you do things instead of just expecting them to trust you as if it is your right."

Professor Dumbledore sighed, and nodded at his Deputy Headmistress. They all knew the argument had hit home and, nodding at each others, all decided to leave the old man to his thoughts. Remus flooded away, while the others returned to their respective quarters.

Professor Dumbledore took his time before he called his phoenix, Fawkes, to him.

[illegible]

Hermione had been watching Miss Collier all day until Harry asked her why.

"I wanted to see that she was all right," she explained. "After last night, I mean..."

Harry understood her worry. He'd had another reason for paying extra attention to Miss Collier all day: He wanted to see how she treated Hermione in class. He needn't have worried, though; while she didn't go out of her way to involve Hermione, she called on her from time to time, this time making favourable comments. Although Hermione had mouthed "Thank you" to him, seeing the happy look on Hermione's face was all the thanks he needed.

It had been a pretty good day, the only downside had been that the three bullies from Tuesday were back in class. So far, however, they

had restricted themselves to glaring at Harry and Hermione. Harry wondered how long that would last.

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During her lunch break at work, Jean Granger had begun reading parts of the book Professor Dumbledore had left. Many of the pages had stuck together and she wondered how long it had been since anyone had read the book.

The first, and largest, section had been the historical background. She had only skimmed through parts of it, filled with witch burnings and other horrors, when she reluctantly admitted to herself that Remus may have a valid point.

The second section, the law itself, which dated back to 1692, was short and appeared to be written in English from the middle ages. She could barely understand any of it. Luckily it was followed by a commentary in far more modern English, which had been written in the 1940s. Again, what Remus had explained was correct, at least as far as he had gone. This was a lot more detailed.

The next section was two short, but detailed guides, "Deciding whether to obliviate or to leave the memories: guide to evaluation" and "Obliviation procedures, reversal of obliviation and the potential dangers of each."

The book finished with a whole section on "Magical/Muggle friendships and associations." This section had the clear warning that "the contents of the articles in this section are the experiences and viewpoints of the authors only and should not be taken to be the official viewpoint of the Ministry."

Mrs. Granger thought wryly that going by the article headings, they might be more interesting than the official Ministry viewpoint as well. "My friend the muggle, what should I say?" "I'm in love with a muggle! Help!" and "My husband just erased my sister's memories! What can I do?" There were also addenda with "The law on obliviation, Proposals for reform" which seemed to date back to the 1920s and a



more recent "Obliviation and Human Rights, with special emphasis on current muggle human rights legislation in Europe" which was dated 1963.

"Hadn't you better get home to meet Hermione?" Her husband's voice interrupted her thoughts.

"Oh, it can't be that time already, can it? Why didn't you disturb me? I've been reading since lunchtime!"

"It's been a quiet afternoon. I managed on my own, and by the look on your face, it looked important."

"It is," she admitted. "I think I may have been a little hasty with Dumbledore."

"Really?" The surprise showed on his face. "That's not like you."

"I just don't trust the man."

"Don't trust him, or are you worried that in a few years, he'll probably be responsible for Hermione instead of us?"

"I don't know. I suppose there might be some of that. Is it wrong of me?"

"Don't ask me. I just wonder how long it will be before we lose her." Seeing the shocked look on his wife's face, David Granger added quickly, "I don't mean it like that. But it's a different world from ours. Whether we like it or not, it's her world, and we're not part of it."

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After arriving home from school and having something to eat, Remus had arrived to take Hermione and Harry to the Burrow for a training session. Hermione had been given the book Professor Dumbledore had left and she took it with her.

Of course the twins didn't miss anything. "What's that?" Assuming they were wearing their correct jumpers, that was Fred, as his jumper had a big letter "F" on the front.

"A book on Wizarding Secrecy," Hermione explained. "Professor Dumbledore borrowed it from the History of Magic teacher for me."

"Binns?" exclaimed George, looking at the book. "He had a book from this century? According to Charlie he never does anything except old goblin wars. He's probably so ancient he was in some of them."

"Shouldn't that be Professor Binns?" said Hermione sternly, expecting Remus to back her up, but Remus was only smiling.

George was saved the trouble of answering when Ron and Ginny burst in, quickly followed by Mrs. Weasley.

"Ron, Ginny, come out of there. They are training and don't need you two interrupting them."

"Why can't we train too?" asked Ginny.

"You're too young," she replied.

"I'm older than Harry," Ron pointed out.

"I don't mind them joining us if you don't," Remus offered. "I can just as easily teach six as four."

Mrs. Weasley didn't look pleased at the prospect. "Well, maybe Ron, but not Ginny. She's too young. No arguing, Ginny. Come on. Ron, you can watch. I'll have to ask your father when we can manage to get you a wand."

"That won't be necessary, Mrs. Weasley. If they are helping me train Harry and Hermione, I'm sure Hogwarts will foot the bill."

"Ron then, but not Ginny."

"Mu-um," Ginny cried.

"That's my final word."

"Please Mrs. Weasley," said Harry. "Can't you let Ginny join us? When I lived with the Dursleys I was always left out of everything and it's horrible."

Seeing the earnest look on his face, coupled with what she had been told of Harry's background, made Mrs. Weasley cringe at the mere thought that anyone could have treated him like that.

"All right, Ginny. You can join them. But you do exactly as Mr. Lupin tells you. That goes for all of you."

"Today they can only watch," Remus replied, "but if it's alright with you, I can take them to Diagon Alley to get wands tomorrow, once I've got funds from Professor Dumbledore."

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Late that night, Harry lay awake thinking for a while. The look of joy on Ginny's face when he'd persuaded her mother to let her join them had made him almost as happy as Ginny. And Ron had pretty obviously been happy for her as well.

Nobody had ever been happy with anything he did at the Dursleys, no matter how much he had tried. He decided that he definitely liked making people happy and went to sleep thinking what he could do to make Hermione and her parents happy. He thought he had just the thing.

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## Author's note...

Anonymous reviews. I don't mind them, even critical ones, but if you expect me to answer what you say, your review can't be anonymous as I can't reply.

My thanks to LordDarQuing for spotting that on one occasion I changed Miss Collier's name in the last chapter (now corrected).

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, especially for his idea about the book and some of its contents.

Please review,

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter twenty-two.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

Hogwarts Staff tell Dumbledore he needs to earn Grangers' trust, Mrs Granger studies the book on obliviation and Mr Granger admits to his fear of losing Hermione. Ron and Ginny get permission to join the training.

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To the surprise of Harry and Hermione, it was Mrs. Granger who had gone in to work early the next morning, while Mr. Granger stayed at home.

"Hermione," he said, "could you call the Weasleys for me please? I'd very much like to speak to Mr. Weasley."

"Okay, Dad. What shall I say it's about?"

David Granger smiled. He'd spotted that this was his daughter's way of finding out for herself what he was contacting the Weasleys about. "Let's just say I want to chat, father to father."

Hermione nodded, slightly frustrated, knowing that his tone meant that she wasn't about to learn any more right now. "I don't know whether he'll have time. I think he works at the Ministry."

She had underestimated Arthur Weasley's interest in anything muggle and a few seconds after she had called him, the fireplace flared again and Arthur stepped out.

"Pleased to meet you again," Arthur said, offering his hand.

At the birthday party, in public, Arthur Weasley had restrained his curiosity about the things around him, partly at the behest of his wife. Now he had no such restraint. First looking up at the light in the centre of the room, then at the Television and the Hi-Fi next to it, he gasped. "Does all this work on eckeltricity, then?"

Hermione was not very successful at trying not to giggle. "Hermione. Apologise to Mr. Weasley. I dare say if I went to his house, I would be just the same."

Shamefaced, Hermione said, "Sorry, Mr. Weasley."

"Good, now off to school with you both. I'll see you tonight."

Once the two children had left, David Granger said, "Actually, that's what I wanted to talk to you about."

"Eckeltricity?"

This time it was David forcing himself not to smile. "No, and it's electricity, by the way. My wife and I have been thinking. How much involvement do the parents have in your world? I mean parents who are muggles with children who are witches or wizards."

Arthur looked surprised. "We call them muggleborns," he replied. "Magical children with two muggle parents." He obviously thought for a moment. "I'm not sure I'm the right one to ask. I don't really know any muggle parents."

"But you know lots of parents who are wizards or witches?"

"Yes, of course."

"That's what I was afraid of."

Arthur looked confused. "I don't understand."

"We're going to lose Hermione, and Harry, aren't we? To your world, I mean. Unless we keep them away from your world totally, they'll find their own place in a world where we have no place."

"You aren't thinking of keeping them from our world?" Arthur asked, sounding shocked at the very thought.

"No," replied David, sadly. "It's a bit part of who she is, they are. I don't think we could do that if we wanted to. But surely you can understand, I, we, don't want to lose them."

Arthur thought for a long minute about how he would feel to be shunted out of his children's lives and his face grew sadder.

"I had never thought about it," he confessed. "Tell me, what do you know of our world?"

"Not very much."

"About as much as I know of yours," Arthur said ruefully. "And I'm supposed to be an expert on muggles." After a pause, his face brightened a little. "Mr. Granger, do you have to work today?"

"I could call my wife and see if she can manage without me. Why?"

"I can get the day off from my department at the Ministry. Why don't I show you something of our world, if you'd like."

"Thank you. I'd like that very much." He quickly telephoned his wife, not noticing the curious look on Arthur's face as he did so. "Can you manage without me today? Arthur Weasley is taking me on a tour... You can? Good. I'll see you tonight... Love you."

"Better than a floo," Arthur commented. "Can you talk just anywhere?"

"Not with this, I'm afraid." Said David, with a smile. "It has to have a line, a cable, which is in one place. But we have mobile phones. They do the same thing, but you can carry them anywhere."

"And you can talk anywhere?"

"Well, almost anywhere. The network isn't complete yet, there are some parts of the country where they don't work..."

"Amazing."

David smiled.

"Okay. Now I will take your arm. Have you done this before?"

"Yes," he replied. His expression showed clearly what he thought of it.

"It's not much fun," agreed Arthur. "Here goes."

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Harry had been so distracted at school that both Hermione and Miss Collier had noticed. Miss Collier had asked him if there was anything wrong, but he'd said there wasn't. Hermione could tell he was hiding something.

Harry was becoming increasingly frustrated. He knew what he wanted to do, but what had seemed so easy when he was thinking about it lying in bed the night before was now anything but easy. And he could tell that Hermione was becoming more and more suspicious. Even though it was Miss Collier's day for playground duty, so she was easier to approach, he hadn't been able to summon the courage to speak to her. The words he'd thought of in bed had vanished from his head. He'd even had trouble answering a dead-easy question in class. This day was definitely NOT going as he'd planned.

Miss Collier was becoming increasingly concerned about Harry. He had been fidgety all day. At one point, in the playground, she'd thought he was going to speak to her, but a girl had interrupted him, telling her that another boy had fallen and hurt his knee.

Her last duty of the day was to watch the children safely off the school grounds. She watched Harry and Hermione leave through the



gate and sighed as they disappeared around the corner. Perhaps tomorrow she'd find out what was wrong?

She noticed that the three boys had turned to follow Harry and Hermione, instead of taking their usual route. She was about to follow them to stop them, when a parent stopped her to ask a question about some test results.

Outside, all was not well. Harry and Hermione had turned into an alleyway, then out on to the path which led to the small housing estate on which they lived. Hermione admitted to him, "I always hated this part of the walk home when I was little. I used to imagine monsters behind every bush."

Harry laughed, but his laughter stopped at once as they both heard, "Hey!" Wierdos!"

Harry found himself shoved aside.

"Get us in trouble, would you?"

Hermione was pushed to the ground. Instinctively, normally Harry would have wanted to run away, but seeing Hermione pushed over made him angry. "Get away from her," he shouted. He reached for the wand he'd kept in his pocket, fingering it all day. He pulled it out, pointed it towards the three boys and cried, "Protego!"

Nothing happened.

The boys laughed at him as he ran to Hermione. One of them put out a foot and tripped him over. He fell over, but landed almost on top of Hermione.

"Hold my hand!"

Hermione looked rather bewildered, but if she didn't react the boys did. "Ooo. Hold my hand," one mimicked as the others laughed.

Miss Collier, having quickly got rid of the parent with a promise to meet her tomorrow to discuss the test results in more detail, had

hurried along the alleyway. When she heard Harry's first cry, she began running to where his voice had come from. As she rounded the corner she was about to shout at the three boys threatening Harry and Hermione when something unbelievable happened.

Harry was holding a stick in his hand and as the boys advanced on him, he shouted something and a golden light came out of the stick and literally flung the three boys away from them. They hit the fence behind them so hard they collapsed to the ground.

Unknown to Miss Collier, Harry or Hermione, far away an alarm went off at the Ministry.

"Harry, you shouldn't have. We'll be in trouble," said Hermione, finally, when she had got over the initial shock enough to speak.

Neither she nor Harry had noticed Miss Collier. Harry's only thought was for Hermione. "Are you all right?" he asked.

"I think so. But I twisted my ankle." She tried to get up and cried out with the pain.

It seemed to Miss Collier that from the moment that strange golden light had appeared, she had watched what had happened almost in slow motion. It was almost as if time had stood still. Hermione's cry of pain brought her back to 'normal time'.

She walked, still in shock, to Harry and Hermione. "What just happened?"

The two children just looked at each other, neither knowing what to say.

Two small cracking sounds heralded the arrival of Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall. They looked at the scene and Professor McGonagall immediately walked over to the three boys. "They're not hurt" she announced, part relieved and part hurried.

"We cannot allow them to remember any of this," said Professor Dumbledore and holding his wand towards them, spoke clearly, "Obliviate."

As he turned towards Miss Collier, he was surprised to find Harry, still holding Hermione's hand, but with his wand raised in his other hand. "No."

"Albus. We don't have time to argue. The aurors will be here any second. We have to get them out of here."

"Take them to Hogwarts."

"I want to go home," said Hermione.

"It would be better," agreed Professor McGonagall.

"Very well," Professor Dumbledore agreed.

"What about Miss Collier?" asked Harry, his wand still raised.

"Who are you?" Miss Collier asked, still shocked. "What is going on?"

"Madam, if you would care to take my arm for a moment, I will explain." The professor raised his own wand again. "Harry, I am just masking your magical signature. We don't want anyone knowing it was you who cast that spell. Let's go, then." He disappeared with Miss Collier.

A moment later, Professor McGonagall disappeared with Harry and Hermione. A moment after that half a dozen cracks announced the arrival of the magical reversal squad from the aurors.

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"What's happened?" cried Mrs. Granger as Professor Dumbledore appeared with Miss Collier. "Are the children all right?"

She was answered by another crack and the appearance of Professor McGonagall with Harry and Hermione.

Professor McGonagall helped Hermione to the sofa, then cast a healing spell on her ankle.

"The pain's gone!" Hermione cried with surprise.

"I should hope so," replied Professor McGonagall. "If I can't heal a simple twisted ankle..."

"Would somebody mind telling me what's going on?" Mrs. Granger asked.

Miss Collier thought the same, but was still too shocked by everything to say anything. She was standing where she had arrived, still gripping Professor Dumbledore's arm.

"Mrs. Granger," said Professor McGonagall. "I'm sure Harry and Hermione will tell us what happened, but can I suggest a cup of tea for us all. I think Miss, er..."

"Collier," said Harry.

"Thank you. I think Miss Collier might like some tea while we explain a few things to her."

Mrs. Granger nodded. "Miss Collier. Do take a seat. Don't worry. You aren't imagining things and nobody is going to harm you."

Miss Collier sat in the nearest chair, while Professor McGonagall took the other chair. Professor Dumbledore left the room.

"Mrs. Granger," he said, when he reached the kitchen. "I apologise for our sudden arrival. I needed to get Harry and Hermione away from the school quickly and Hermione wanted to come home."

"What happened?"

"That's what I want to know," he said. "but Professor McGonagall is quite correct. Miss Collier has had a big shock and at least deserves an explanation."

"Aren't you just going to obliviate her again?"

"That would be best in my opinion. But I want to hear what happened first. Harry was very determined to stop me obliterating her." He smiled. "He was actually ready to try to duel me, I think. That, I believe, is your doing."

"It's our fault?"

"Not fault. To your credit if anything. Harry was too scared to open his mouth a few months ago. Now he is prepared to take me on if he has to. Now, can you contact your husband? After the events of this afternoon, we are going to have to decide what to do and it would be better if he was here as well."

"Okay." Mrs. Granger went to the phone.

While Professor Dumbledore insisted on helping Mrs. Granger prepare the tea, Professor McGonagall was beginning her explanation.

"Miss Collier. Harry and Hermione are, for want of a better word, magical."

"Magical?"

The professor smiled. "Yes. Magic is real, as you have just seen. Harry is a wizard, like Professor Dumbledore, the man you brought you here. Hermione is a witch, like me."

Not sure what to say to this apparently crazy woman, Miss Collier decided to play along, so she asked, "Are... Are there many of you?"

"In Britain there are several thousand. We are a small, but we like to think significant minority."

"How come we never hear about you?"

"We tend to live mostly separately from non magical people, who we refer to as muggles. We also keep our world secret, it is one of our highest laws."

"Then how come Hermione...?"

"Hermione's parents are muggles. Every year a few magical children are born to parents who are not themselves magical. Hermione is one of them. Normally, this shows with some minor outbursts of uncontrolled magic, but when they reach eleven years old, they are invited to come to our magical school, Hogwarts to begin to learn to control their magic."

"But I saw Harry do... something. And he's nowhere near eleven."

"Hermione and Harry have begun their training much earlier, for reasons I'm afraid that I cannot say."

Another loud crack announced the arrival of Arthur Weasley and David Granger.

A moment later, Jean Granger and Professor Dumbledore came in with the tea.

"More chairs, I think," said the Professor, conjuring two more armchairs, which barely fitted into the lounge.

Miss Collier's mouth opened just a little wider. "You can make anything?"

"Only the most powerful wizards can make something which lasts," Professor McGonagall explained. "Normally things created by magic, we call it conjuration, last for only a short time."

"Now, Harry," said Professor Dumbledore. "We would all very much like to know what happened this afternoon."

Harry audibly gulped and Hermione gripped his hand tightly.

"Those three boys, the same ones as before," he said, looking at Miss Collier. "They pushed Hermione and wanted to beat us up. I tried to stop them, but nothing happened..."

"Nothing, Harry?" asked Professor McGonagall. "It didn't look like nothing when we arrived."

"That was after. I tried a shield, but nothing happened. So I wanted to get Hermione and run away, but they tripped me. Then I made Hermione hold my hand and it worked that time."

"He didn't make me," protested Hermione. "If Harry's in trouble, I am too."

"I don't think we'll be sending Harry to Azkaban yet, Hermione," Professor Dumbledore smiled.

"Azka what?" asked Harry.

"Wizard prison," said Hermione.

"Doesn't your law say they can use magic in self defence?" asked Jean Granger.

The professor smiled. Mrs. Granger had obviously been reading the book he had sent. "Yes, Mrs. Granger. It does. And that means that even if we were in the habit of sending eight year-old children to Azkaban, Harry would still not be in trouble."

"Then why did you have to get us away before the owls arrived."

"Aurors, Hermione. They are like our police. You know we have tried to keep where Harry lives a secret. If he was seen by a lot of aurors, it wouldn't stay secret for very long afterwards, I'm afraid."

Hermione seemed satisfied.

"Harry, I must ask you. Why did you have your wand?"

Harry looked guilty. "I wanted to tell Miss Collier about us."

"Why was that, Harry?" asked Professor McGonagall.

"She's Hermione's only friend, apart from me."

"What exactly did Harry do?" asked Miss Collier. "And are the boys really all right?"

"They will be fine," Professor McGonagall assured her.

"Harry cast a shield spell, we call it Protego," Professor Dumbledore explained. "It is designed to repel evil spells, but if it is strong enough it will also repel physical objects, including human beings. The boys will remember nothing apart from leaving school as normal. If I hadn't wiped their memories, Hermione, I suspect that everyone would have simply thought they'd gone mad anyway. In any case leaving their memories intact would have made life impossible for Harry and you in school and may well have placed you in danger."

"What about Miss Collier?" Hermione asked.

"Why don't we ask her?" suggested David Granger.

"Very well," said Professor Dumbledore. "I can remove your memories of what has happened. Alternatively I can leave them, but you would never be able to tell anyone."

"As you said, if I told anyone, they'd think I'd gone mad. I'm still not sure that I haven't."

"It took us some time to come to terms with it," admitted Jean Granger, "and Hermione's our daughter."

"It might be easier if I didn't remember any of this;" Miss Collier admitted, "but wouldn't it be better to have someone at school who knows?"

"That brings us to our main problem," said Professor Dumbledore. "Although we may have managed to prevent news of Harry getting



out this time, I'm afraid that it will be too risky allowing Harry and Hermione to continue in a muggle school."

"So what will they do for school?" cried Jean Granger. "What do magical children do?"

"Most are home schooled," explained Professor McGonagall. "Some go to local muggle schools, but they don't have wands or any training. That will really be impossible now for Harry and Hermione."

"I'm not happy with the home schooling," said David Granger. "No disrespect intended, but I get the impression that wizard children aren't exactly trained to cope in our world."

"They aren't," admitted Arthur Weasley. "Most adult wizards couldn't, myself included."

"I want more than that for Hermione and Harry. They will probably choose your world as they grow older, but I want them to at least have the choice. It seems to me that muggleborn children, that's children like Hermione," David added to his wife, "are at a disadvantage right from the start in the wizard world, while magical children know nothing of our world."

"So? How does that help us?" his wife asked.

"Arthur and I have been discussing this and obviously this afternoon has brought this to a head. How would you feel about Harry and Hermione spending a week at the Weasleys, learning what it's like to actually live in the wizarding world? Then the Weasley children could spend a week here, to learn about our world."

Hermione's look of excitement was not matched by the expression on her mother's face.

"I think it's a good idea, but it still doesn't solve the problem of schooling."

"No," David admitted. "But it will give us two weeks to try to find an answer that satisfies everybody."

"If you like," offered Miss Collier, "the week they are here, I could test the, what do you call them? Magical children?"

"Yes," said Arthur.

"And I could at least let you know how their education stands up to our standards. I'd have to do it after school of course."

"Perhaps the Weasleys should come here first," suggested Professor McGonagall. "I'd be quite interested in seeing how our form of early education compares with a muggle school, and that would give us time to try to find a solution before the two weeks of exchanges are finished."

Professor Dumbledore stood up, satisfied. "Very well. That would appear to be settled. Miss Collier, would you care for me to return you to the school?"

"It's okay. I'll drive her," David Granger offered quickly as the pale look on Miss Collier's face.

"Okay. I will go back to Hogwarts and check if there are any repercussions from this afternoon which need clearing up." With that, he disappeared.

"Goodbye Hermione, Harry, Arthur, Mr. and Mrs. Granger. And Miss Collier, it was nice to meet you. I look forward to meeting you next week." And Professor McGonagall was gone as well.

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Author's note...

This is one very angry writer posting this chapter this morning. I just read that Warner Bros are breaking their promise to fans and pushing back the release of Half Blood Prince by EIGHT months to July 2009 for commercial reasons (they want a summer blockbuster). I saw "Phoenix" five times in the cinema. I've made up my mind to see this

once only (as there are always pirate copies available here I can buy, which I never have done UNTIL NOW).

Talking of "here", a hello to my fellow HP fans in Argentina – a few of you are reading this story.

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

Please review,

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter twenty-three.

### Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

Mr. Granger talked with Mr. Weasley about his fears for the future.  
Harry uses magic

to defend Hermione after school.

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"You're taking all this very well," David Granger commented as he was driving Miss. Collier to her home. The original plan had been to drop her off at the school, where her car was parked, but Jean Granger had suggested that Miss Collier still looked too overwhelmed to drive. She had agreed with that assessment.

"To be honest, I still think I'm going to wake up at any moment and find this is all some weird dream. I'm not even sure if it's a dream or a nightmare."

"The professor can probably still remove your memories of all this if you prefer."

"No," she replied firmly. "I stayed on in education because I wanted to know more, to study more. My father always said I was too curious for my own good." She laughed slightly. "Very like your Hermione. Now I have the opportunity to know a world I never knew existed, that was right under my nose. How could I turn that down?"

David frowned. "They aren't insects, to be studied, you know, just because they are different."

"I know that. You know why I went into teaching, especially the younger ones, when I could have easily had a job in a university? I want to instil that curiosity in a new generation of children. To make them as interested in what is all around them as I was, as I still am. Most of them can't wait until four o'clock and it's time to go home. And the class I had last year was the same. And the class I will have next year will probably be the same. Now maybe, just maybe, I have the chance to make a real difference. You think I'm going to give that up?"

David almost laughed as he pulled the car to a stop outside Miss Collier's house. "I'm sorry. It's not that anything you've said is funny. It's just you sound so much like Hermione."

"I'll take that as a compliment."

"It was meant as one. You gave Jean your number, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Okay, as soon as we know what's happening, I'll be in touch."

"I'm not sure I deserve this," she replied. "I really messed up with Hermione."

"You must have done something right. Harry seems to trust you and believe me, that is quite an achievement. I'm not even sure we've managed it yet."

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A very different conversation was taking place in the Burrow. Molly Weasley wasn't happy. "You can't be serious. You want to let the twins go to stay with them for a week. How can they possibly keep Fred and George in line? Even if they don't take their wands..."

"They'll be taking their wands. Remus is going to continue the training while they are there."

"They'll wreck the place. We'll have the Ministry down on our backs..."

"Molly. What's really wrong?"

She sighed heavily. "They're too young to go away. And what if anything happens? They are muggles after all."

"We've met the Grangers. They are good people. And David is going to give me a tele-whatsit so he can call me if anything is wrong. And the kids can call us on the floo."

"She's only a baby! And Ron's not much more."

"I wouldn't let Ginny hear you say that if I were you," Arthur smiled. "She's got too much of you in her. She'd never forgive us if we let the others go but kept her back."

"Do they really have to go?"

"No," he admitted. "But I think it will be good for them, don't you?"

Molly nodded. "But I'm going to worry all week."

Arthur hugged her tightly. For all his bravado, he knew that he would worry as well. "You know. We have it easy."

"What do you mean?"

"We expect parents of muggleborns to send their children away to Hogwarts. It's a world they can't possibly understand, full of dangers, yet we see them trying to cheerfully wave off their children on platform nine and three quarters. At least we get our children back."

"What do you mean?"

"It's something David said, made me think. Nearly all muggleborns end up living in our world. How many parents of muggleborns do you know? I don't know any. They just don't have a place in our world."

"But how could they? Without magic?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure I could do it."

"Do what?"

"Send our children off to Hogwarts every year if I knew that every year we'd lose them a little bit more. They're like us, you know?"

"How?"

"David and Jean Granger. I always thought of muggles as, well, muggles. But they're like us. They love their daughter like we love Ginny. And they know they're going to lose her to our world one day. If by sending our four to visit them, we can begin to build some bridges... Well, I think it's worth doing, that's all."

Molly hugged her husband warmly, then released him. "I'm still going to worry though."

"I know."

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Saturday dawned early in the Granger household, far too early for some. Hermione's eyes snapped open well before sunrise. She immediately disentangled herself from Harry, jumped off the bed and pulled open the curtains on her window. She saw a mesmerizing sight, the sky was beginning to the first signs of colour, shades of grey were mixed with a definite tinge of red. It was going to be a nice day. Excitedly, she shook Harry awake.

Harry was less enthusiastic. "What time is it?"

"The Weasleys are coming," she answered, as if that answered his question.

He stretched his neck and glanced at the window. To him it was mostly dark. "Too early," he groaned. "Go back to sleep or you'll wake your dad."

Desperately trying to contain her excitement, but deciding that waking her parents so early was not the best way to start the day, Hermione, collapsed down on the bed again. She put her arm around Harry and whispered into his ear, "The Weasleys are coming."

Realising that he wasn't going to be allowed to go back to sleep in peace, Harry asked, "I wonder if the twins are awake yet."

Hermione sat up and noticed a positively evil grin on Harry's face. "Why?" she asked suspiciously.

"Perhaps we could wake them up."

"Harry, we can't possibly floo there at this hour. You'd get us in such trouble."

Harry laughed. "I know. We can't go and wake them up."

Hermione seemed satisfied, but Harry hadn't finished.

"But I know who can."

"Who?"

"Hedwig of course. I've still hardly ever used her to send a message since you bought her for me. Hedwig?" Harry put out his hand and the still tiny white owl, but already quite a bit bigger than it had been when they'd brought it from the shop, flew from the open door of her cage to Harry's arm. "Do you think you can manage to deliver a message to Fred and George?"

Hedwig looked quite comical as she glared at Harry, then pecked his hand.

"Ow! Okay! Of course you can. Can you write it, Hermione?"

"You ought to practice, you know," she told him.

"I want them to get this before they wake up," Harry explained.



"Alright," she agreed. "What do you want me to write?"

Five minutes later, they were back in bed, trying to get back to sleep. Or more accurately, Hermione quivered with excitement and muttering "The Weasleys are coming!" like a mantra, while Harry was pressed on her back and unsuccessfully trying to fall asleep again. Harry eventually got fed up and decided to borrow a trick he had seen in the playground the other day, after making sure one arm had Hermione unable to move, he stuffed the little finger of his other hand into his mouth and, making sure it was thickly covered in saliva, stuffed it into Hermione's ear and wriggled it.

Hermione didn't appreciate the intrusion, though, she tried to pull away from the offending finger, but her pillow prevented the motion. She tried to wiggle her head away from it, but it followed. She tried to pull away from Harry, but he had a good leverage and wouldn't let go. She elbowed him in the gut, but she just didn't have enough leverage, so, using her legs and her underside arm, she pushed against him and made them roll until she was on top of him, so she could hit him.

He removed his finger at her first hit from above, but didn't try to stop her until her fourth hit or so, when he waited for her arm to come up before he passed his arm below her armpit, making her lose leverage again. He seemed to have calmed down and didn't seem to be about to do anything else, so, while she grasped his arms, she calmed down as well. Harry was giggling like crazy, while she fumed at him.

"What was that for, Harry? That was disgusting!"

"I wanted to make sure your hearing was okay," he replied, still giggling.

"My hearing?" she asked, genuinely puzzled. "Of course it's okay!"

"You said 'The Weasleys are coming!' a million times."

"Don't exaggerate, Harry." She frowned. "All right, I'll stop."

Harry just laughed in reply. Hermione, now feeling more confident, relaxed and let her head lie on top of Harry.

"Hermione?"

"Yes, Harry?"

"Can you move? You're heavy."

"Nope," she replied. "I'm keeping my ears safe."

Harry sighed and tried to get himself comfortable, but Hermione hadn't finished... "And, Harry?"

"Hmm?" he asked, sleepily.

"I'm getting even."

"Okay," he answered, while he hugged her harder for a moment.

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George was awakened by a determined tapping on the window, as he slept nearest to it. Seeing the owl, he sighed and got up to open the window. Hedwig flew around the room, landing on Fred, who was still sleeping, and promptly pecked him on the head.

"Ow! Wassup?"

George, despite his own irritation at being woken up, couldn't help laughing at the tiny owl, who was continuing to fly around Fred, giving him the occasional gentle peck and avoiding Fred's arms as Fred tried to push her away. Fred finally got up and Hedwig went calmly over to George and stuck out a leg. George removed the letter.

"Muggles have alarm clocks which work by electricity, so we thought we'd send Hedwig to make sure you woke up in time. See you later, Hermione and Harry." Having delivered her message, the white owl hooted contentedly and flew out the still open window.

"What time is it?" Fred yawned.

"About six," George replied.

"You know what this means," Fred said.

"WAR!" they both said together.

Unlike Hermione and Harry, who had eventually settled back down in bed once Hedwig had left as they didn't want to wake their parents, Fred and George had no such inhibitions and had quickly woken everyone in the Weasley household.

Molly had given up trying to sleep and, after threatening the twins that she wouldn't let them go if they weren't quiet, had started on breakfast. Although the threat of being left behind while the two younger ones went to the Grangers had miraculously had a quietening effect on the two boisterous boys, she had got up anyway.

Maybe a few extra minutes with her children before she let them go for the first time wouldn't be so bad. She tried to remember. Had it been so hard with the older ones? They had been older after all. "Yes," she admitted to herself. Only the determination not to upset Arthur or embarrass the boys had restrained the tears at Kings Cross the first time Bill, Charlie and Percy left for Hogwarts. Especially Percy, she remembered. He would have been mortified if his mother had started crying on the platform in front of everyone.

And now this was Bill's final year at Hogwarts. She wondered if she'd feel the same when he left for work for the first time. She suspected that she would, even if he still lived at home, which seemed increasingly unlikely considering his interest in working for Gringotts.

Even the twins seemed to sense Molly's mood and became quieter. "We'll be okay, Mum," Fred said seriously.

"I know you will." She turned back to frying the bacon. This house was going to seem quiet for a week.

She'd been shocked by Arthur's comment the night before, about how muggle parents had to let their children go, perhaps forever. He had obviously hit it off with Mr. Granger, what was his name? David, she thought. She decided that she would have to get to know Mrs. Granger. She couldn't remember her name.

Arthur couldn't resist teasing his wife as she piled food onto the children's plates. "They will feed them, you know."

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Even Harry was up and had eaten breakfast well before the time the Weasleys were due to arrive.

Arthur was first through the floo, followed by the twins, one at a time, then Ron, then Ginny and finally Molly.

Shortly after the Weasleys had arrived, the telephone rang. "Hello?... Oh, hello!... Yes of course you can, but Remus will be doing a training session... That'll be fine... We'll see you later then... Bye."

Jean Granger put the phone down and announced, "Miss Collier will be visiting us this afternoon to see you all. She seems quite eager to meet you all. You will be staying today, won't you Arthur? Molly?"

"If you're sure it's not too much trouble," Molly answered.

"It's fine. I'd better get on with lunch."

"Do let me help."

"I can manage..." Jean began, then seeing the look on Molly's face, she added, "but I'd welcome some company in the kitchen. Funny how everyone seems to avoid it when there's work to do."

Arthur laughed. "Not everything's different in the muggle world, then."

Jean laughed with him, then said, "In that case, you can join David after lunch for the washing up, without magic."

Both Jean and Molly laughed as the two women made their way to the kitchen.

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Author's note...

Sorry this took so long – I suffered a bad attack of depression and once I'd finally managed to write the chapter wasn't able to concentrate on the edits my beta returned to me. The delay is 100% my fault. No flames to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, who I thank especially for Harry's trick on Hermione, which was his idea.

One thing, I've been much better this weekend, so the next chapter is almost written.

The Latin American edition of the DVD for Order of the Phoenix started with a short scene about video piracy with the catchphrase "what are you teaching your children?" Warner Bros., what are you teaching them? That's it's okay to break a promise to kids if you can make money by doing so? I trust you'll drop that hypocritical ad in the next DVD?

There is a growing movement to fight back. We can't get the November date back, but at the least we can teach movie makers a harsh lesson.

A New Unbreakable Vow:

No opening weekend.

No repeat viewings.

NO other WB movies:. (Star Wars: the Clone Wars, Towelhead, Nights in Rodanthe, RocknRolla, Body of Lies, Pride and Glory, Slumdog Millionaire, Eddie Dickens and the Awful End, Yes Man, Gran Torino, Spring Breakdown, Ninja Assassin, This Side of the

Truth, The Informant, Observe and Report, Whiteout, Terminator Salvation: the Future Begins, The Box, Untitled Superman Returns Sequel)

Let WB know this.

Warner Bros. 4000 Warner Blvd Burbank CA 91522 818-954-6000

Warner Bros. Studios 4000 Warner Blvd Burbank CA 91522 818-562-3062

I'm posting WB email addresses and links to some HP Youtube videos on my yahoo group which is called brigrove

Lesson: Don't. Piss off. The Potter fans.

Please review,

Brian

## The Harmony bond, chapter twenty-four.

### Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to J., her various publishers and Warner Brothers. This story and any new characters belong to me.

In the previous chapter...

Mr. Granger talked with Miss Collier. The Weasley parents talk about parents of

muggleborns. Harry pranks the twins.

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Lunch was a slightly stilted affair, the twins being silenced by a stern look from Molly almost every time they opened their mouths.

As soon as they'd left the table, Hermione pulled Ginny upstairs to her room. "Can I ask you something?"

"Yeah. What?"

Hermione quickly explained what Harry had done that morning... "So I wondered if you could think of a way I can get my own back."

At Ginny's enthusiastic grin, she added, "Nothing too much. He's still not really recovered yet."

"Recovered? What from?"

"Didn't your parents say anything?"

"No. What?"

Hermione quickly explained how they had found Harry and didn't even notice how the younger girl's face had paled as she heard of Harry's life at the Dursleys.

"But he's okay now he's with you, isn't he?"

Hermione hesitated.

"Isn't he?"

"He couldn't trust anyone, Ginny. Not even me, even though we were bonded. They hurt him so much he nearly ended up killing us. Only now..." She stopped, realising Ginny was looking stunned.

"You're bonded? With Harry?"

Hermione nodded.

"But that means..."

Whatever it meant Hermione wasn't to find out as the door opened and her mother came in to tell them that Remus had arrived.

"Now," Remus began. "I've shown you the basic spells you'll be using. We'll start with three teams of two. Harry and Hermione, then... I think we'll split the twins up, George with Ron and Fred with Ginny. As soon as you get three hexes through the shield of another team, that team is out."

"We'll never get anything through their shield," complained Fred.

"Good point. Harry, Hermione, no holding hands."

"Of course," said George. "Little GinGin will never get Harry anyway." Ignoring the glaring looks from both his mother and Ginny, he continued... "What was her favourite, Fred?"

"Harry Potter and the Hungry Horntail. Or was it Harry Potter and the Mermaid Menace?"



"No, Fred, I think it was Harry Potter and the Wicked Werewolf myself."

"Stop it!" Ginny screamed at them.

"What are all those?" Hermione asked.

"You mean you don't know? You live with Super Harry and you don't know?" Fred answered.

"They're all children's story books," explained Arthur.

"And we got them all for GinGin," laughed George. "She loves hearing about Harry Potter."

Gin's face was bright red with anger and embarrassment. She reached for her wand, but her mother grabbed it first. So she turned round and ran up the stairs, slamming the door behind her.

Molly looked almost as embarrassed as her daughter. "I'm sorry about this. I'll go to her," she told Jean.

Harry looked shocked. "Are there really books about me?"

"Yes, Harry," Remus replied. "When you disappeared from our world, story books about your adventures became a real craze."

"And the twins did get all those books for Ginny," Arthur admitted. "What they didn't tell you was that she refused to have them read to her."

"But I thought Harry was her favourite story?" Hermione asked.

"The real story, yes. But she hated all the other stories. She got annoyed when she saw anything about the boy who lived."

"Didn't stop her dreaming about Harry, though," said Ron, sniggering.

Hermione ignored him and asked Arthur, "Why?"

"She said Harry lost both his parents when he was a baby and it wasn't right to make up stories about him. She used to wonder how you were, Harry, and said she hoped you were happy."

"If I'm honest," Remus added, "she was probably the only one in our world who thought much about you."

"Most of us were so relieved that You-Know-Who was gone, we just assumed you'd be okay."

"I am now," Harry said.

The embarrassed silence was broken by Molly's reappearance with Ginny. Ginny's look of embarrassment was changed to one of surprise when Hermione almost ran to her and gave her a hug.

"Thank you," Hermione said.

Bewildered, Ginny asked, "What for?"

For once, Hermione couldn't find the right words.

"For being the only one who thought about Harry the person instead of the celebrity," David explained.

"Oh," said Ginny.

"Shall we begin?" Remus asked.

This time a doorbell interrupted them. Jean let Miss Collier in and quickly introduced her to everyone, ignoring the slightly suspicious look Molly gave to the very casually dressed teacher.

"Don't let me interrupt anything," Miss Collier said.

"Okay. Let's begin," said Remus.

His hope to get the lesson under way at last was quickly dashed. "It's still not fair," Ron complained.

"Why?" asked Hermione.

"We've only just started learning magic. Harry's been doing it for years."

"Just how thick can you get, Ron?" Ginny screamed. "Harry didn't even know he was a wizard till this summer. His aunt and uncle used to starve him and keep him in a cupboard and let his cousin beat him up all the time..."

The stunned reaction of Ron and the twins was matched by the shocked look on Harry's face.

Turning to Hermione he mumbled, "Thanks, Hermione," and walked out.

Hermione quickly followed him upstairs and into their room.

"How could you?"

"I didn't mean to..."

"Oh, it just slipped out by accident, did it? Why don't you tell everyone?"

"Harry! Please! Listen to me."

"Why don't you go back downstairs? I'm sure they'll all love to hear you."

"Please, Harry. It wasn't like that."

"Then how was it?"

"I was talking to Ginny..."

"I know. And now she's told everyone."

"Not about that. I was asking her how I could get you back for this morning."

"Well you did. Alright now?"

Ignoring his interruption, she went on, "And I told her it could be anything too much as you still hadn't really recovered from the Dursleys... I didn't want you to stop trusting me again. I'm sorry, Harry."

"You wanted to prank me?"

Hermione nodded.

"I'm sorry too, Harry," came Ginny's voice. Ginny had quietly slipped in and hadn't dared to interrupt. "Ron just made me so mad."

"It's okay," he replied, staring at the roof.

"We ought to go back down," said Hermione.

"I'm not going down," Harry said. "I don't want them all being sorry for me."

"My brothers aren't like that," said Ginny, but Harry refused to budge.

The three of them sat on the bed until they heard thundering footsteps on the stairs.

"Come on," said the twins in unison. "It's not the same without Super Harry."

Not giving him a chance to refuse, they each grabbed an arm and began to carry him downstairs, laughing.

At the bottom of the stairs they let him go. They following Remus outside and he quickly conjured thick cushions behind them. The twins insisted that Ginny go in between Harry and Hermione. "This way they can't hold hands by accident," they explained.

"Right. Now it's payback time," Ginny said, pointing her wand at each of the twins and Ron in turn.

Remus reapplied the charm on Harry and Hermione's wand to allow them to cast shield spells on their own, then did the same to the other four wands. Miss Collier watched, fascinated, as they cast spells on each other.

They were all fairly evenly matched as the charms gave each of their spells approximately the same level of power. Ginny, however was faster, and quickly took out Ron, so the twins ganged up on Ginny to remove her from the team. Then they turned to Hermione. Harry was so busy shielding Hermione that he didn't notice a quick look between the twins which preceded a sudden switch to attacking him instead.

The twins emerged victorious. "Weasleys rule!" they chanted.

"I can see the headline now, George," said Fred.

"Yes. Daily Prophet special edition. The End of a legend! The Boy Who Got Defeated By The Weasley Twins."

"Autographs may be available later for a small fee."

For a second almost everyone looked shocked and turned to see Harry's reaction. Ginny looked ready to explode.

At first Harry didn't seem to know how to react, then he seemed to shake and burst out laughing.

"Are they always like that?" Miss Collier asked Molly.

"Always," the twins answered her themselves.

"This should be an interesting week."

After a short break, they resumed their duelling, this time one on one, taking turns. Suddenly Hermione grabbed Harry's hand and pointed her wand at the twins. "Aguamenti" she cried.

The force of the water knocked the twins back almost to the fence. "We'll have to be careful," she thought to herself, before shouting out "The Wet Weasleys. Nearly Drowned By The Boy Who Lived."

"This is becoming a habit," commented Fred.

"It's okay," said Ginny. "They've just learned that my brothers are big drips."

To everyone's surprise, still holding Harry's hand, Hermione cast the drying spell on the twins.

"What?" she asked. "I just copied what Professor Flitwick did last time. And I read up on it just to make sure I was doing it right."

"She's mental that one," commented Ron, to murmured agreement from the twins.

Later, as they ate tea, Fred commented, "You know, George?"

"Know what, Fred?"

"It's a pity we have to keep Harry, here, a secret."

"Why's that, Fred?"

"It would make a great new book."

"That it would, Fred."

"Harry Potter and the escape from Durzkaban."

"Not forgetting his friend Hermione Granger – Wonder Witch!"

"Don't worry about my brothers," said Ginny, trying not to laugh. "Dad always said the Mediwitch must have dropped them on their heads when they were born."

"You know, Fred? I think we've been insulted."

"You could be right, George. You could be right."

"She'll be throwing us out of the Harry Potter fan club next."

"She wouldn't, would she?"

"She might."

"But that would only leave GinGin and Ronniekins here..."

"And about a million others."

"True."

Their flow of words was interrupted at this point by Remus, who had been struggling not to laugh before he managed to swallow his tea, finally failing and unfortunately spraying tea as he did so.

"I'm really sorry," he said as he quickly waved his wand and cleaned up the tea which he'd managed to get everywhere.

Hermione had been getting increasingly annoyed at the twins teasing Harry about his fame, as she knew he'd already begun to hate being famous, but at this point Harry started laughing.

"That's my brothers," said Ginny. "Doesn't matter how famous you are, you'll still get teased."

"They're brilliant," said Harry.

"Perhaps we should start a Weasley twins fan club?" suggested Hermione.

"Don't you dare!" cried Arthur. "We'd never hear the end of it."

Fred and George put on a hurt look which made everyone else laugh again.

When the laughter had subsided, Remus asked Miss Collier, "So what do you think of your introduction to the magical world?"

She replied, "All I've seen really is duelling with each other. Is that all you use magic for?"

"No," replied Arthur. "In many ways we use magic like you use techlolo..."

"Technology?" David suggested.

"That's it. Tech nol o gee," Arthur repeated carefully.

David explained, "A lot of things we do with electricity, wizards do with magic..."

He was interrupted by Hermione, "And Witches."

He nodded. "And witches. For example, they cook by magic, travel by magic, clean by magic."

"Oh, I wish!" Jean sighed, making everyone laugh again.

"Remus," asked Molly, "is it just the garden that is warded or the whole house?"

"Warded?" asked Miss Collier.

"It's a sort of spell," explained Remus. "It prevents muggles seeing into the garden to see them practice magic, it also prevents the Ministry knowing about it."

"Ministry?"

David laughed. "Sorry, I didn't mean to laugh, but your reaction is just like ours was. The trouble is, every answer leads to another question."

"Our government is the Ministry of Magic," Remus explained.

"And why don't you want them to know?"



Remus sighed. "There are laws against under-age wizards... and witches," he added quickly, with a glance at Hermione, "practising magic. This is mainly to prevent muggles finding out about us, but also to prevent accidents before they are trained how to use their magic. But because Harry is here, they need to train, but for his safety nobody must know he is here."

Miss Collier looked at Harry, who looked embarrassed.

Remus continued, "As you will have gathered from the twins, Harry is famous. Not all wizards are good. One, Grindelwald, ruled most of Europe, and was our equivalent to your Hitler. In fact he was the power behind Hitler. Dumbledore defeated him in personal combat in 1945."

"That man defeated Hitler?"

"Well, Grindelwald, the wizard behind Hitler, yes. That's basically why he's so respected. He's the most powerful wizard alive, anywhere. When a new Dark Lord arose a few years ago, everyone expected Dumbledore to defeat him as well. But he attacked Harry's parents when he was a baby, and, we don't know why, tried to kill Harry as well. But due to a type of magic called blood magic, the spell rebounded and the wizard was never seen again."

"His name was Voldemort," said Hermione sharply. Miss Collier noticed most of the others around the table flinch at the name.

"What?"

"The new Dark Lord, everyone is afraid to say his name. It's Voldemort, and he was just a murderer."

"Quite so," agreed Remus. "The trouble is, we don't really believe that... Voldemort... is really dead. And even if he is, his supporters would like nothing more than to kill Harry. That is why he must be trained in defending himself, and that is why his presence here is a closely guarded secret, even from the Ministry. And to answer your original question, Molly, yes, the whole house is warded."

"Good," said Molly, standing up and hoping to lighten the mood. "Now this is how we clean up." She began waving her wand and the things on the table lifted themselves up, much to the shock of the muggles present, especially Jean, who looked worried about her crockery, then, led by Molly's wand, flew into the kitchen, where everything was washed up without anyone having to touch it.

"It beats having to load the dishwasher," David commented.

With a final wave of Molly's wand to dry the crockery, it began to put itself away.

"You're going to have to teach Hermione to do that," sighed Jean.

"And Harry," insisted Hermione.

"Yes, and Harry."

"I'd wait until their magical control is good, though, unless you want a lot of smashed crockery," said Molly. "Or at least until they get good at the repairing spell."

Everyone laughed again.

As Hermione and Harry usually shared his bed, it had been arranged that Ginny would sleep in Hermione's seldom-used room, while the twins and Ron slept in a magical tent in the garden, complete with chimney. The tent, which was larger inside than outside, astounded everyone apart from the Weasleys and Remus, and made David make a comment about something called the Tardis, which had to be explained to the wizards present.

To Hermione, Harry seemed very serious when they finally went to bed. "What's up?" she asked. "Didn't you have a good time today?"

"You're all in danger because of me, aren't you?"

Hermione thought for a second, trying to think of something she could say to stop him worrying, but realised that he'd just know she was lying, so she admitted, "Yes."



Please review,

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter twenty-five.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to She Who Must Not Be Named, her various publishers and a certain film company, all of whom have lawyers prepared to infringe long standing civil liberties in their pursuit for profit (as they did in England in a case which has already been followed to suppress lawful protests). The Goblins and the Malfoys would be proud.

This story and any new characters belong to me, unless she and her lawyers decide otherwise, rather like the work on the Lexicon, which SWMNB used while it was useful to her, then successfully sued once she had no further use for them. Obviously being the world's first billionaire author isn't enough for her greed.

The effective new extension of copyright laws will come as no surprise to anyone who noted how the Disney Corporation bought enough influence in Washington to get copyright laws changed to keep Mickey Mouse in their bank balance when previously he would have become public domain.

To She Who Must Not Be Named and your money-grubbing cohorts, I have only two words to say, Avada... (It's a pity your story has ended, because it takes away my opportunity to NOT buy any more of your books. A lot of fanfics are better written anyway.)

In the previous chapter...

Hermione tells the Ginny about Harry's past and their bond and Ginny almost tells her

that they are married. Ginny lets slip about Harry's past to everyone. Dueling with the Weasleys.

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Harry and Hermione woke with a scream. Harry reached for his wand and pushed Hermione behind him.

He didn't even notice Hermione tugging on his pyjama sleeve and trying to tell him everything was okay.

The light went on and for the first time, he noticed that both he and Hermione were soaked through. In the sudden bright light he saw first the two twins laughing their heads off, then Hermione's parents raced into the room with Ron and Ginny right behind them.

Hermione's parents both let out a joint sigh of relief when they realised that it was nothing more than one of the twins' pranks which Molly had warned them about.

Their relief was short-lived as they heard the distinctive popping of apparation outside and within seconds, Remus was running up the stairs, quickly followed by Professors McGonagall and Flitwick, then Professor Dumbledore.

Professor Dumbledore saw the soaked pair, glanced at the twins and quickly took in the situation. "Arthur and Molly will be here any second. I think we had better meet them downstairs."

The others all went downstairs while Harry and Hermione scrambled into some dry clothes. By the time they got downstairs a surprisingly nimble Molly was running through the front door, Arthur seconds behind her.

"Molly, it's okay. You can put your wand down. Everybody is safe."

"What happened?"

She saw the Professor glance at the twins. "Fred, George, if this is one of your pranks..."

"Don't be too hard on them, Molly," Professor Dumbledore said. "They meant no harm and they weren't to know."

"Yeah, Mum," said one of the twins. "They sent Hedwig to wake us up early yesterday..."

"That's no excuse for raising the alarm like this, especially at one in the morning and waking everyone up!"

"I'm sure they had no idea this would happen, right boys?" said Arthur.

The twins shook their heads.

"What's this about you two waking up the Weasleys yesterday?" demanded David Granger, and nobody was sure if he sounded angry or impressed.

Hermione looked sheepish.

"It wasn't her fault," said Harry. "It was my idea to send Hedwig."

"Then I trust that honours are now even," said Professor Dumbledore sternly, but nobody could miss the amused twinkle in his eye.

"They had better be," said Molly.

"Perhaps all wands should be kept safe with Hermione's parents at night," suggested Professor McGonagall. The sternness in her voice was obviously not put on.

"That is an excellent suggestion, Minerva," Professor Dumbledore replied.

"Excuse me, Professor, but how did you all get here so quickly?" asked Hermione, now fully recovered from her earlier shock.

"Very simple. Built into the wards we erected here is an alarm. It wakes a number of us the moment magic is used here when it is not expected, like at night."

"But how did you get here so fast?" she asked again.

"We apparated of course," he replied.

"But you can't apparate from Hogwarts. It says so in Hogwarts, a history."

Professor McGonagall smiled. "We used the floo to go to a house in Hogsmeade, then apparated from there."

"Oh. That makes sense," Hermione replied, satisfied.

"We had better arrange what hours the alarms are set for," said Professor Flitwick.

"Perhaps we can discuss that later," replied Professor Dumbledore, "when we've all had some much needed sleep. Now we will leave you good people to go back to bed."

As they walked back to the garden gate which was the nearest point from which they could apparate, Remus said to Professor Dumbledore, "May I have a word before you go?"

"Of course. Minerva, I'll see you later."

"Much later, I hope, Albus," she replied as she and Professor Flitwick disappeared.

"Yes, Remus?"

"I don't think it's a good idea for them to give their wands to Hermione's parents at night."

"Why's that?"

"I saw what happened to James and Lily. If they are attacked here, I know Harry and Hermione can't do much, but they should at least have the chance to defend themselves until we can get here."

Professor Dumbledore's face looked pained with the memory of that night. After a few moments he nodded. "I agree. Are you coming later, Remus?"



"I'm not really up to it today," he replied.

"Okay, I will see you in a few days."

The two men disappeared.

Back in the house Molly was giving the twins a quiet, for her, talking to. Harry and Hermione began to go back upstairs.

"Don't you two sneak away," called Jean Granger. "I think you owe the Weasleys an apology."

After the four parents had forced the twins, Harry and Hermione to apologise to each other, even if the apologies were rather mumbled, they ordered all six children to return to bed.

In the confusion earlier, nobody had given it much thought, but when Ginny saw Hermione going to bed in Harry's room, she couldn't resist following her. Pushing the door slightly open so she could peek through, she saw Hermione climb into bed with Harry and put her arms around him. Letting out a squeak, she ran back downstairs to her mother and, not even noticing the others in the room, gasped out, "Mummy, Hermione sleeps with Harry! I know they're bonded, Mum, but..."

Her mother was almost as startled as Ginny had been and couldn't keep the surprise from her face.

Jean Granger looked embarrassed so David explained. "Yes, Ginny. They do sleep together. You've heard about how Harry was treated."

Ginny nodded.

"Madam Pomfrey told us that Harry found it difficult to trust anyone after that, even his bond-mate, so difficult that the bond wasn't forming properly."

This time it was Molly who looked startled, "but that means..."

"They nearly died," David confirmed in a flat tone of voice. "So Madam Pomfrey and Professor Flitwick ordered some things to help the bond form correctly. One was them receiving some early training together, which is where you and your brothers come in, the other was sleeping together, for the time being at least."

Ginny still looked somewhat shell-shocked at the thought.

Molly was also shocked, but was still able to ask, "What about when they are older?"

"We hope the bond will be formed enough by them that it won't be necessary."

Molly nodded.

David turned back to Ginny. "So do you think you can help them by training with them?"

Ginny nodded. "Yes, Mr. Granger," she replied seriously.

After Ginny had gone to bed, Molly spoke to Jean alone. "You must have been so worried."

Remembering the day they had learned of the bond and Hermione running out and being missing all day until Harry found her brought tears to Jean's eyes. For some time after Arthur had apparated home and David had gone to bed, Molly sat with her arms around Jean as she told her everything that had happened.

Hermione had also taken longer than usual to get to sleep, thinking of how Harry had tried to take all the blame for pranking the Weasleys, and how he'd forgiven her so easily for telling Ginny about his treatment at the Dursleys, how he'd spoken to Miss Collier because he knew she was hurt and how he'd defended her at school. The thought of a bond with Harry all her life, something which had scared her at first, didn't seem so bad any more.

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Hermione woke up to find that Harry had already got up and dressed without waking her. She hoped desperately that Harry hadn't shared her dreams as they'd been mostly about him, dreams she felt were childish about them being together when they were grown up.

As she was in the shower she could hear the growing level of noise that told her the rest of the house was waking up. She dressed and went downstairs to breakfast. Her mother and Harry were already there.

As they sat down to eat, Hermione looked at Harry for any sign that he knew of the dreams she had been having. Thankfully there was no such sign. She wasn't sure what she'd have said if he'd known. She would have been mortified.

They were soon joined by Ginny, who had managed somehow NOT to look like she'd had a disturbed night. The look on Ginny's face told her that they would be talking when they had the chance.

The twins arrived, bickering over something she managed to tune out. She noticed a grin on Ginny's face. "What?" she asked.

"Don't worry," Ginny replied. "You stop hearing them after a while."

David Granger came downstairs and immediately complimented his wife on the rather more lavish than usual breakfast.

"Don't thank me," she had replied. "Harry did everything. I tried to help but he didn't need any help. I swear he's better in the kitchen than I am."

Harry looked embarrassed and didn't notice the look of sadness in Jean's face as she said that.

Last to arrive was Ron, still in his pyjamas and rubbing sleep out of his eyes.

"Ron's just like the Cannons," said Fred.

"Yes, Fred," George replied. "Always last."

The other children laughed at the comment, until Hermione saw her father looking at Ron with a thoughtful look on his face.

"Why is that being like a canon?" asked Harry.

"Not a canon," George replied.

"The Cannons," said Fred, as if that explained everything. Seeing the puzzled look on Harry's face, he added, "They play quidditch."

"Or try to," finished George.

"They're just going through a bad spell," said Ron, defending his team.

"What's quidditch?" Harry asked.

The four Weasleys all looked at him with equally stunned expressions.

"You don't know about quidditch?" asked Ron, making it clear that he thought Harry just had to be joking.

"No," said Harry, slightly irritated. "Is it a game?"

"A game, did you say, my dear boy?" replied Fred, in a haughty tone of voice.

"He said a game, Fred," George confirmed.

"He did, didn't he?"

"That he did. A game."

Even Ron looked amused at the twins' banter.

"Let us explain," the twins said together, then a silent look passed between them.

"Quidditch, my dear boy,"

"Is the main reason for being a wizard."

"It's the finest example of skill and nerve..."

"...pitching wizard against wizard..."

"...in a battle in the heights..."

"...to which most may be only watchers..."

"...while others become stars who shine brightly."

The twins finished, leaving Harry and Hermione looking more puzzled than ever.

"Did you understand a word of that?" Jean asked.

"You're not meant to," explained Ginny. "You're meant to see how clever they are. It gets boring after a while."

"Boring, she said, George."

"And I think she means us, Fred."

The two twins huffed loudly and turn their backs to Ginny as the others laughed.

"Yes, it's a game," said Ginny.

"Not just a game," insisted Ron. "It's the best sport ever. We play it on brooms."

Ron made an attempt to explain quidditch, but seeing that neither Harry nor the Grangers really looked like they were following his explanation, he finished, "we'll have to show you next week. I'm gonna be a keeper."

"And the twins want to be beaters," added Ginny. "They like knocking everyone off their brooms. I don't know what I want to be yet. A chaser is fun, but I'd like to be a seeker too."

"You can't be both," Ron pointed out.

Annoyed, Ginny snapped, "I know that."

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As they had almost finished breakfast, Jean Granger had an announcement. "Miss Collier will be here shortly. As she won't have a lot of time during the week, she coming to give you a few school lessons today and a test at the end of the day."

"School?" Ron protested.

"On a Sunday?" added Fred and George together.

Only Hermione seemed happy about the thought of more lessons, though Harry tried to be happy for her. All Harry really wanted to do was either go out and play, or spend the day watching television. He knew he watched too much television, but it was something, one of many things, he'd never been allowed to do at the Dursleys.

To Harry's surprise, and that of the Weasleys, Miss Collier's lessons were actually fun. Hermione's parents looked in from time to time and saw the young teacher obviously enjoying herself.

Over lunch, even Ron had been enthusiastic about their first history lesson, which had been about the civil war. He'd been especially interested in the battle plans she'd demonstrated on the blackboard Remus had conjured for her the day before.

At the end of the afternoon lessons came the tests which most of them had been dreading. Gathering up the papers, she said she'd take them home to mark and return later that evening after the children had gone to bed.

When she returned, as previously arranged, she found David and Jean Granger had been joined by Arthur and Molly Weasley.

"Molly? May I call you that?" Molly nodded, uncertain about how she felt about this young woman almost half her age who was about to give judgement on all she had taught her children.

"Thank you. Firstly, can I say that you've done brilliantly in the subjects you have taught your children. The twins and Ginny are quite a way ahead of where they should be in Maths and English. Ron is a little behind, but I think I know the reason for that."

"Why is that?" Arthur asked.

"You have, I think, seven children? Six boys and one girl?" Arthur nodded in reply. "Can you tell me a little about the older three? How they are at school, I mean?"

"Well," Molly began, "Bill is head boy at Hogwarts. He is brilliant at charms, in fact he helped Professor Dumbledore with the wards on this house," she added proudly. "He could go for any career in the Ministry if he wanted to, but he's more interested in working for Gringotts as a curse breaker." She sounded disappointed about that.

Miss Collier didn't understand what Gringotts was or why they'd need a curse-breaker, but she understood enough to say, "So he is quite brilliant academically, then?"

"Yes," Molly agreed, "Although we think Percy, he's our third, will be better. He's much more studious. He gets top marks in almost every test in almost every subject..."

"...Although he isn't as good on the practical side," Arthur put in.

"And the other one?"

"Charlie. He's not so good academically, although he's still above average," replied Molly.

"But he is brilliant at quidditch, that's our main sport," Arthur explained. "He's captain of the Gryffindor quidditch team. They are all in Gryffindor house at Hogwarts."

Miss Collier was nodding. "So all three excel in some way. Then there's the twins, who compete by not competing, pretending they aren't interested in lessons while they absorb information like a sponge rather like Hermione. In fact they are probably as bright as Hermione and that is saying something. Fred and George are able to easily and totally dominate every situation in which they find themselves, while Ginny is such a strong character that even the twins know not to push her too far. Am I right so far?"

"Yes," replied Arthur simply, impressed at the young teacher's perceptiveness even if he did feel a little uncomfortable at her dissection of his family.

"So there's Ron. The youngest son, desperate to shine like his older brothers, so desperate that he tries to be funny like the twins and from what I have seen so far, just manages to appear gauche and even rude. If the twins say something rude, everyone laughs, it's just the twins, but if he says something out of place it just isn't the same somehow."

"But we don't treat him any different to the others," Molly argued.

"No? I'd be surprised. I was determined not to and even I found myself laughing at some of the things the twins said, but when Ron tried to be funny, it just fell flat. He's actually quite intelligent, but he tries to copy the twins and it doesn't work. If I were teaching him, I'd want to find the things he can shine at. Maybe I'm saying too much..." she faltered.

"No," said Molly slowly. "Ron is a problem," she admitted.

"To come back to the other subjects for a moment, in Geography none of them had any idea whatsoever, I assume that it's not very important in the wizarding world."



"Not really, given that we tend to apparate or floo to most places instantly;" said Arthur.

"That explains that then," Miss Collier replied. "I didn't really have time to get into the sciences, but they didn't seem to know much about any of them, except a little biology. Obviously our history isn't a big topic either, though Ron was really interested in the battles of the civil war and grasped what happened even quicker than Hermione. He obviously has a great interest and feel for how battles are fought and I'd really like to encourage that."

Molly and Arthur found themselves nodding in agreement.

Miss Collier went on, "I'm guessing that Hermione and Harry would show up poorly if they were tested on their knowledge of the wizarding world."

"Probably," admitted David Granger, "although Hermione's read everything she can since she found out she is a witch."

"I'm still guessing here, but I suspect that places them at a disadvantage in the wizarding world, just as wizard children would find it difficult to function in our world. The difference is that probably your children will never need to survive in our world, whereas Hermione and Harry will almost certainly need to live in yours. In some ways it's a pity, the twins would be natural scientists, they even took apart the ball-point pens to see how they worked. Luckily, Ginny knew your cleaning charm, Molly."

Molly smiled at that.

The discussion between the parents about what to do went on late into the night.

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Author's note...

If not much happened this chapter, don't worry. Massive changes ahead in the next chapter and a huge decision for Hermione.

The Civil War referred to in this chapter was, of course, the English Civil War. Any teacher in England would refer to it as simply THE Civil War, and would refer to the American Civil War as the American Civil War, the opposite way round to a teacher from the U.S.A.

Thanks, as usual to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

Apologies for the long delay, due to a phone line that had only worked for a few minutes a day over the last two weeks, if I'm lucky, plus a bad chest infection that kept me off work for a week. The good side to the chest infection is that it gave me time to write the next chapter which is now complete and in editing.

Thanks to the hp-lexicon, which is shut down at its old location, but is currently back online at hplex and then the usual DOT org. Like She Who Must Not Be Named, I use them extensively for research.

An interesting insight into U.S. copyright law. If I was taking the mickey out of Harry Potter, I could sell this story as it would be classed as a parody. Because we fanfic writers (mostly) respect her work, we can't. Irony isn't it?

Another early correction. Thanks to Charpie for pointing out that I had Hermione's middle name wrong in chapter two. To be fair, I had an excuse. As the HPLexicon says "In 2004, She Who Must Not Be Named told us her middle name was 'Jane' (WBD); however she changed it to 'Jean' in Book 7, possibly so that Hermione and Umbridge wouldn't share the same middle name." In any case, I have now corrected it and reuploaded chapter two.

Please review, but when anyone makes serious points in a review, as HPGW never did, please either sign the review OR give me an email address, so I can answer you.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter twenty-six.

Disclaimer:-

"Sorry folks, we can't let Brian write the disclaimer..."

"...He's too boring."

"That's right, Gred."

"I'm not!"

"Yes, you are, you only mentioned one of the great titles we gave you..."

"...and that was the least funny one, wasn't it Forge?"

"Yes, so we're writing this bit... To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Parry Hotter and all the other canon characters, including us, belong to She Who Should Be Stuck In A Portable Swamp, her various publishers and a certain film company..."

"... who should be underneath the aforementioned Portable Swamp."

"That's MUCH better, Gred."

"I quite agree, Forge. The only thing is, as it's a legal bit, we should change Parry Hotter back the way it should be."

"You mean The Boy Who Had To Put Up With Being Abused Then Nearly Murdered Every Year By She Who Should be Thrown To The Centaurs Tied To Dolores Umbridge..."

"That's a bit much Forge, even for her."

"How about Tied To Rita Skeeter, Gred?"

"That's okay."

"What are you up to now?"

"Gotta go, folks..."

"Mum's coming. Enjoy the story. Oh and all you Harry and Hermione shippers, don't worry, Brian says that this WILL BE a romance bond story, despite how Harry feels about Hermione as his 'sister' in this chapter!"

As the twins run off, Nachoman pokes his head out of the dirt and asks Brian if the coast is clear. Brian bops him.

In the previous chapter...

The twins prank Harry and Hermione, Ginny discovers that Harry and Hermione sleep

together. Miss Collier tests the Weasley children.

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Jean Granger woke up early. After turning over to try to get back to sleep and finding that she couldn't, she finally got up and went downstairs to make herself a cup of tea. She opened the door to pick up the milk and looked up and smiled. Hermione was at her bedroom window, looking into the distance, just as Jean had known she would be.

Quietly closing the front door, she went into the kitchen to put the kettle on. The early morning was almost silent, except for the distant rumble of traffic on the motorway half a mile away, which was never totally silent. The rest of the houses in their street were as quiet as their own.

As she poured out her tea, she smiled to herself. It certainly wouldn't be quiet later today at the Burrow. She really wondered how Molly coped, but she seemed to be in her element in total chaos surrounded by children.

It may have been David's idea, but Molly had been the driving force. First she had offered to teach Hermione and Harry everything she could about the wizarding world, while David had paid Miss Collier a few hours a week to give them "normal" lessons. Arthur and Molly had been reluctant to allow their own children to attend Miss Collier's lessons, as they didn't have the money to help pay her, until David pointed out that Molly was teaching Hermione and Harry without charging them.

Jean smiled to herself as she remembered that after that they'd only been able to keep Arthur out of the lessons himself by giving him his own set of books and having the children do their homework under his "supervision", which basically meant that they spent most of their homework time explaining to him what they had learned.

David had wished that they could hire Miss Collier full time, but it was impossible, they simply couldn't afford it.

Hermione had overheard them and burst in, saying, "Can't we can't contact parents of other muggleborns?" she had asked, "to share the costs?" After Jean had told Hermione off for eavesdropping, Molly had said that that was quite possible and had flooded Hogwarts at once.

The hour or so after Professor Dumbledore had arrived had convinced Jean that she never wanted to be on the wrong side of Molly Weasley. The Professor had refused to give Molly access to Hogwarts records of future students saying that it was important for Harry's safety that the fewer people possible had contact with him. Molly had been furious, pointing out that they were talking about newly-discovered muggleborns, who had no other contact with the wizarding world and would never betray Harry if they had.

The professor had still refused until Hermione had suggested running advertisements in the national newspapers for parents who had noticed strange unexplainable events happening around their children to contact them. Realising that Hermione's parents were quite serious about her plan to do that, Professor Dumbledore had given in.

Enough of the parents they had contacted were interested to actually make a small school viable and Miss Collier had been eager to work for them full time.

Before the school, which was set up at the Burrow rather than the Grangers' house for security reasons, was really properly under way, it had again been Hermione who had said something that would make the next major change.

"What about children who don't have parents?" she had asked. This had become a bit of an obsession with her. Having seen at first hand the effects of growing up without loving parents, made her worry about other children without their parents.

Once again it had been Molly who had taken Hermione seriously and suggested that they find out how many there were and see if they couldn't find people to adopt them. Once again, Professor Dumbledore had tried to say no, until Molly had asked him whether he thought it was a good idea to have a wizarding child growing up in a children's home. As she had said firmly, "Without the influence of good parents, who knows how they might turn out?"

Molly had been as surprised as Jean had been as the Professor's face blanched almost white and he had agreed without another murmur.

Molly, of course, had wanted to take in those they hadn't been able to find adoptive parents for herself, and she had been upset because she knew she couldn't care for the younger children AND teach the wizarding side of their school. She and Arthur also didn't have the money to support more children.

When David pointed out that there was enough money to employ Remus to teach full time as well as Miss Collier, that obstacle had been overcome.

To Jean's surprise, it had been Professor Dumbledore who had solved the other problem. "Hogwarts has long had a fund to support those who cannot afford to come to Hogwarts," he had explained.

"Over the years it had grown to a substantial sum, certainly enough to pay you to care for those who need it."

He had silenced Molly's mumbling about not accepting charity by pointing out that "In effect, we're paying you to be the Hogwarts boarding pre-school for underprivileged children. Are you telling me that you won't accept that job when you are clearly the best person for it?"

Molly's other objection was about the effect on her own children. It had been Charlie who had argued against that objection. "Mum, you never loved us any less when the younger ones were born. Why would you think that you wouldn't have enough love to go around if you do this?"

"It's all right for you," Molly had replied. "But what about the twins and Ron and Ginny? I simply won't have as much time for them."

"We'll be alright, Mum," Ginny had answered.

"Yeah, it'll be great not being the youngest boy," Ron had added.

So the always-noisy Burrow had gradually become noisier.

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A sudden noise behind Jean Granger brought her out of her reminiscing. "Morning, Harry. Tea?"

"Yes, please, Mum."

She smiled as she kissed him on the cheek, and managed not to laugh when he tried to pull away saying, "Mum, I'm too old for that."

It had taken him almost a year to call her that and that was only thanks to Hermione and Remus. Hermione had explained to Remus that, even though he really wanted to, Harry was scared to call her parents "Mum" or "Dad" because it would feel like he was betraying the memory of his late parents.

Remus had simply told him, "Harry. I was one of your parents' best friends. Will you believe me if I tell you how I think they'd feel about it? They would want you to have a family and love them. They would be happy for you, I promise you."

It was shortly after Harry had started to call them "Mum" and "Dad" that they decided to try splitting the children up at night. Hermione had actually begun feeling awkward around Harry sometimes, especially at bedtimes, and they'd both actually been happier to sleep apart. Apart or not, their bond had continued to grow so that Jean was sure that they could read each other's mind at times.

"Hermione's awake," Harry said, interrupting her thoughts once again. Looking at the teapot, he asked Jean, "Shall I take her one?"

"Good idea."

"She's looking for the owls," Harry explained. "She's still worried they might not come."

Jean Granger snorted with laughter in a way for which she would have scolded Hermione for as being unladylike. "I don't need to be bonded with her to work that one out," she told him.

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The owls came, of course, as everyone but Hermione had been certain they would, and soon Hermione was flooing to the Burrow clutching the precious letters in her hand.

It had been a difficult decision, where to send them. They had narrowed the choices down to three, Hogwarts in Scotland, the Salem Witches' Institute in the United States and Beauxbatons in France. Obviously they already had contact with Hogwarts and the Grangers had contacted the other two. Hermione had favoured Beauxbatons, while Harry thought America sounded good. His preference might have been influenced by the fact that, in spite of he



and Hermione taking private French lessons for eighteen months, he still found the grammar more difficult than she did.

The prospect of Hermione and especially Harry NOT going to Hogwarts had shocked not just the adult witches and wizards who knew them, but the other children in the school at the Burrow.

Hermione's parents knew that they could decide where Hermione went, but it was doubtful if Dumbledore would allow Harry to be sent to another school. Knowing that neither she nor Harry wanted to be separated for that long every year had left Hermione torn.

Seeing the distress Hermione was in had angered Harry and he had told Remus in no uncertain terms that he would go where Hermione went and they'd have to tie him up and drag him there if they wanted to force him to go to Hogwarts instead.

It had been Professor Dumbledore himself who had settled the matter. He had flooed to the Grangers and told all four of them that it was for them to choose. He would not force Harry to come to Hogwarts.

Professor McGonagall had been shocked when he had told her what he'd said. "Minerva. He needs a strong loving family. Voldemort tore his family apart once. I won't be responsible for doing it again."

Minerva had been sure that there was a lot the headmaster wasn't saying, but she left it at that.

Which school Hermione and Harry should go to was one of the few things Molly and Jean had disagreed on. The fact that Professor Dumbledore had left the decision to them had taken away most of Jean's reluctance to sending them to Hogwarts, but she and David had decided to let Harry and Hermione decide, which Molly felt was irresponsible. Molly had, however, promised the Grangers that she would not try to influence the children one way or another.

Harry had grown in confidence over the intervening two years and no longer simply followed Hermione's lead on everything. In fact they squabbled like brother and sister and seemed to rarely agree on anything, so much so that Madam Pomfrey had expressed surprise

that the bond even survived until Remus pointed out that although they argued between themselves, if anyone came against one of them, the other would back them up, no matter what. Madam Pomfrey hoped sincerely that the fact that they had started to see each other as brother and sister wouldn't cause too many problems for their bond later on.

Everyone had expected arguments between Harry and Hermione over the choice of school as Harry's least favourite option was Hermione's favourite, but the arguments never came.

When the Granger parents told them that they would leave the decision to each of them, and they could even choose different schools if they wished, Harry had simply replied, "I'll go where she goes."

"Why's that, Harry?" Jean had asked.

"School's school," he had shrugged. "It doesn't really matter to me where we go. But it's important to her."

That had earned him a massive hug from a tearful Hermione, so much to his disgust that he threatened to go to America just to get away from her hugs and kisses.

"I don't kiss you that much!" she had protested.

"You did on my birthday," he had countered.

"That was ages ago," she had replied, "and that was your birthday kiss."

"Boys don't do stuff like that," he had argued, "that's girly stuff."

Hermione had just huffed at him and mouthed something in frustration which her mother was fairly sure was "Boys!"

Hermione had been changing her mind about where to go almost every day. Now the owls had arrived and she had to send a reply.

She had taken Hedwig to the Burrow with her, but by the end of school she was still struggling to decide.

Hermione's after-school birthday party was well under way when she went out to get Hedwig and put a letter on her leg and sent her flying.

She returned to her party to find that everyone went silent.

"What?" she asked, knowing exactly what everyone wanted to know.

Her mother glared at her to stop the teasing. "Where are you going?"

"Harry's parents aren't here," she explained, "and I know they'd want him to go where they went, so we're going to Hogwarts."

For the first time in ages, Harry went up to the girl he had come to think of as his sister and gave her a hug. "Thanks," he whispered.

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## Author's note...

To repeat – this is NOT a brother/sister bond fic, despite how Harry feels at the moment.

Oops – I mentioned I'd made a correction to chapter 2. I forgot to upload it until about 6 hours after I uploaded chapter 25, so if you redownloaded it in that time, you'll have to redo it. Sorry.

I don't normally like fictional conversations in the author's notes or disclaimers, but the twins insisted!

Talking of She WMNBN and her obsession with people stealing her ideas, has anyone read Wizard's Hall by Jane Yolen? Published in 1991, years before Harry Potter, it features a messy-haired wizard called Henry, who doesn't think he's good enough, who gets sent away to wizarding school with moving, speaking and winking portraits and meets a red haired friend and they have to battle a dark wizard trying to destroy the school. Sound familiar Jo? -- DOT org SLASH

wiki SLASH Wizard's\_Hall The Leaky Cauldron condemn Jane Yolen for being jealous, perhaps they should try to find out if she has good reason for being annoyed at someone who seems to have taken quite a lot of her ideas unless you believe in an awful lot of coincidences. As someone with legal training I DON'T.

Or perhaps THE BOGGART by Susan Cooper, published in 1993 sounds familiar. After visiting the Scottish castle her family has inherited, Emily finds that she has accidentally brought a boggart (a malicious spirit) back to Canada.

Or how about The Secret of Platform 13 is a children's novel by Eva Ibbotson, and illustrated by Sue Porter, first published in 1994. The book has gained extra significance as many readers find it similar to the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling, although the first book of that series, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone was published in 1997, three years after this book was published. (They both mention a platform that leads to a different world.)

Harry Potter was a character in a 1986 movie called "Troll." In the movie "Troll" Harry Potter was a dark haired, ordinary boy that discovered magic and battled a troll. Gee, sounds a lot like Rowling's character.

Nachoman points to a certain high-budget film where a certain hotshot actor plays a blind man who takes a "tour of pleasures" in New York to then return to a campus town, the seat of a very famous boarding school. He then defends a youth who had apparently witnessed who had placed a cream-filled balloon on top of the headmaster's car. The names of the three guilty parties include the words "Harry", "James" and "Potter".

Or ( see geocities DOT com SLASH sayswamp SLASH worst DOT htm ... Many see striking similarities between "Harry Potter" and "The Worst Witch," by Jill Murphy. Murphy wrote the first "The Worst Witch" novel in 1974 when only 18. This book was made into a 1986 movie. There are so many similarities that I can't even begin to list them here.

"Comic book fans have noted that a comic book series first published in 1990 by DC Comics called The Books of Magic by Neil Gaiman shares many similarities to Rowling's book. These include a dark haired young boy with glasses named Tim Hunter who discovers his own potential as the most powerful wizard of his age after being approached by magic wielding individuals, the first of whom gifts him with a pet owl."

Warner bought the rights to Harry Potter, then later bought rights to "The books of Magic," along with television rights to "Sabrina" and "Worst Witch." With billions of dollars at stake, did Warner Brother buy off people that Rowling may have copied from?

And we won't mention the huge list of similarities between The Lord Of The Rings and Harry Potter books, will we Jo?

With so many things in Harry Potter "borrowed" without permission from other authors, I wonder how much of the Harry Potter stories are actually original. Methinks Jo doth protest too much, especially as she stopped a Russian publisher who tried to publish a book about a Russian wizarding school claiming it was based on Harry Potter.

Dmitry Yemets & Tanya Grotter and the Magic Double Bass Neil Gaiman's "Hunter" is a lot more like "Potter" than the Tanya Grotter book is. Supposedly the Russian author Dmitry Yemets plagiarized Harry Potter in his book Tanya Grotter and the Magic Double Bass because both main characters are orphans who attend wizard school and fight evil wizards. Harry Potter rides a broomstick and Tanya Grotter rides a double bass.

Now compare Potter to the "Worst Witch." Isn't Potter more like the Worst Witch than Grotter? If we follow the standard of Warner and J.K. Rowling, is she not a plagiarist? They were sure quick to sue Dmitry Yemets. Is there a double standard here?

I just hope that all this eventually gets up and bites her and WB in the ARSE.

Don't forget that the hp-lexicon, which is shut down at its old location, is currently back online at hplex and then the usual DOT org

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter twenty-seven.

Author's note – To reiterate, despite the fact that Harry refers to Hermione as his sister at this stage, this is NOT a brother/sister bond.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to She Who Must Not Be Named, her various publishers and a certain film company.

In the previous chapter...

Hermione's eleventh birthday. Mrs Granger looks back over the last two years and

Hermione chooses a school.

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After making her choice, Hermione had spent the rest of her birthday party changing colour. It had started shortly after she'd eaten some chocolate frogs sent to her as a present from the twins, who, of course, were away at Hogwarts. Her skin had become first a tanned colour, then totally golden, while her hair had become bright red. Then her skin had faded to yellow while her hair turned completely black. This was swiftly followed by bronze coloured skin, which Hermione would have liked if it weren't for the blue hair which went with it. That was, of course, followed by silver skin and green hair before the cycle began again with Gryffindor red and gold.

Hermione's initial outrage was not shared by anyone except Molly and even Molly hadn't been able to resist a smile.

David had told her, "well, we always told you that chocolates were bad for you," which cracked everyone up again, this time including Hermione.

Ginny had admitted to knowing that the twins were planning something, "as they couldn't get you last year and Mum wouldn't let them do anything in McDonnys the year before that."

Hermione, for once, hadn't bothered to correct Ginny. It just made her even more eager to hurry up and go to Hogwarts and start learning charms like that, which, she had had to admit, were "quite clever".

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For Hermione, most of the next year dragged. "Why couldn't you have had me three weeks earlier?" she had complained to her parents.

"Why?" her mother had asked, being less perceptive than usual.

"Then I could have gone to Hogwarts this year."

"But don't you want to go with Harry?"

"I do," she admitted, in a frustrated tone of voice, "But I don't want to wait either."

Having almost a year between receiving her letter and actually going to Hogwarts had given her a lot of time to think and both her parents had wondered what she was going to come up with next. But it was Miss Collier who she chose to talk to about it.

"What's on your mind, Hermione?" Miss Collier had asked her after school about a week before the Christmas holidays.

"I'm just wondering."

"I can see that. Something's bothering you."

"It's just that, before we started this school, nobody even thought about muggle families. Will it be the same when we go to Hogwarts? I bet they don't even try to involve them. From what the Weasleys say they don't even have much contact with wizarding families."



"And that bothers you?" Miss Collier couldn't resist teasing, "You want your parents keeping an eye on what you get up to at school?"

"No, but I don't want them to feel left out either." Hermione went quiet for a moment then admitted in a lower voice, "I heard them saying, before they started this school, that they were afraid of losing me, bit by bit."

Feeling slightly guilty for teasing Hermione, Miss Collier asked, "And you don't want them to feel like that?"

Hermione shook her head. "No."

"Have you ever thought about a P.T.A.?"

"What's that?"

"It's something most muggle schools have. A Parent Teacher Association. Parents and Teachers meet together to talk about their children, the school... In some schools they even elect some of the governors."

"I don't think the Hogwarts teachers would like that," Hermione replied gloomily.

"Don't give up before you start," Miss Collier scolded. "And even if the teachers won't take part, at least the parents could meet together. They wouldn't feel so isolated."

Hermione had spent the next week and most of the run up to Christmas contacting the other parents of children in the school. Christmas came before she knew it and she was woken up early. "Come on, presents!" Harry had almost screamed at her.

Even after living with them for over two years, Harry was still so excited over getting presents, she guessed, because he'd never had any before.

She thought about their first Christmas together. Harry had been genuinely astonished that he had as many presents as Hermione and had suddenly excused himself and run upstairs to what at the time was their room.

She had found him crying. "What's wrong?" she had asked him, wondering what they could have done to upset him so.

"Why couldn't they love me?" he had wept.

"They do," Hermione had protested, totally bewildered.

"I don't mean them. I mean..."

"The Dursleys," Hermione had replied in a voice like ice. She swore to herself that if she could ever find a way to get away with it, she'd make them pay for what they'd done to Harry.

Two years later, however, there were no tears and Harry seemed to have forgotten the Dursleys had ever existed, for which all the Grangers were grateful.

The slowest year in Hermione's life rolled on. Ron's birthday in March had meant him actually refusing to eat the chocolates the twins had sent him. Ron not eating chocolate was a first. The others shared them out and ate them without any side effects and found a note at the bottom from the twins. "Ron. You just got pranked!"

Arthur had then handed him another box of chocolate frogs. "This is your real present from the twins." As Ron looked at it suspiciously, Arthur assured him, "Don't worry, I bought them myself. The twins haven't been near them."

Hermione had thought about what she could do to get revenge on the twins as their birthday approached.

The trouble was that all the Weasleys had gone to the dragon reserve, where Charlie had been offered a job when he left school the following summer. To calm his parents' nerves, he had accepted an invitation to visit the reserve with them, and, of course, all the

Weasleys had gone together. She could probably have still done something, but she wanted to be there to see the results, so she made up her mind that she'd plan something really big for their next birthday.

Ron had come back determined that he wanted to work in a dragon refuge too, but everyone had laughed because he'd been scared of a spider.

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Harry's eleventh birthday was another huge party, this time, as it wasn't during the school year, it was held at the Grangers' house. Jean and Molly had made all of Harry's favourite things and of course the twins celebrated in their own unique way.

Harry, suspicious of any sweets the twins made, had enjoyed his slice of Molly's treacle tart, not realising that as he'd brought it out from the kitchen, Fred had quickly sprinkled some powder on it. In seconds Harry had sprouted yellow feathers and his nose had lengthened to a sharp point.

The twins hadn't been happy. "It still needs work," George said sadly.

"It was supposed to turn you into a canary," said Fred.

"Turn him back right now," Molly ordered.

"We can't," the twins had replied.

"But don't worry," added George.

"He'll change back in a minute or two," Fred finished.

After the children had gone to bed, Jean Granger checked on her daughter, and smiled as she heard her sleeping daughter murmur, "Only one more month."

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The very next day, Hermione had gone with Ron and Molly Weasley to buy the things she and Harry needed for school, then she had been like the proverbial cat on hot bricks until the first day of September arrived.

"Come ON, get up! We'll miss the train." Hermione's excited voice shattered the peace of the Granger household.

Despite Harry's insistence that "we've got ages yet", Hermione continued to rush everyone until they were breakfasted, packed and on their way to London. After a short drive to the station, their train took them directly to Kings Cross, which meant they wouldn't have to use the underground to get there, a relief to Hermione's parents given the size of the trunks, not to mention Hedwig's cage.

They had arranged to meet the Weasleys but were beginning to wonder if they'd somehow missed them, when, at less than ten to eleven, Molly Weasley came puffing up to them.

"Go on, Percy, you first."

Even though they'd been told about it, Harry and the Grangers were still amazed to see Percy disappear through the wall. After the twins had gone through, Hermione gave her mother and father a final hug and ran at the wall, quickly followed by Harry, who had just been hugged by Jean Granger, but had insisted on shaking David Granger's hand as he wasn't a little boy any more.

Hermione was so eager to get to Hogwarts that she was even impatient on the Hogwarts train. She had snapped at a blond haired boy called Draco Malfoy who had come into their compartment wanting to meet the famous Harry Potter and pulled her wand on him when he had asked why Harry Potter was friends with "those low-life Weasleys".

She had spent half the journey trying to get the older students to tell her what she had to do to be sorted, but none would do so. Ron was

quite terrified as the twins had told him that they had to wrestle a troll, but Hermione had thought that was just silly. "I hope I read the right books," she said desperately to herself.

When they finally arrived at Hogsmead station, she was first out of their carriage and almost fell into the arms of the biggest man she had ever seen.

"First years, this way," he was calling, so she, Harry and Ron followed him.

As they each struggled with their trunk, she noticed a porter pulling the trunks belonging to the blond boy, who was sauntering along behind. After the porter had deposited the boy's trunks at the station entrance, told everyone else to leave their trunks there and been ignored when he put out his hand to the boy for a tip, Hermione asked him, "I thought this was Hogsmead station?"

"Aye, that it is, Miss."

"Where's the village?"

"About a mile down that road, Miss."

"Why didn't they build the station nearer the village?" she asked.

"Well, Miss. It was like this. They thought the station'd be better near the railway."

Before Hermione could decide if she was being made fun of, the porter had walked away, so she continued following Hagrid down to the lake, where they climbed into the most precarious looking boats she had ever seen, let alone had to ride in.

Her worries about the boats' safety was driven out of her mind, however, at the first sight of Hogwarts Castle. Nothing they had seen on their visits to the hospital wing had prepared them for the sheer majesty and beauty of the castle. She wished the moon had been up but even without it the lights from the castle lit the building up in a golden hue.

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"Hermione Granger."

Hermione eagerly ran forward to sit on the stool and put on the sorting hat.

"Hmm," Hermione heard in her head. "Where's the other half of you?"

"Are you the hat talking to me?"

"I don't see anyone else here, do you?"

"Oh. No. I suppose not," she admitted.

"You haven't answered my question."

"What do you mean?"

"The other half of your bond. I should sort you together. Is he here?"

"You can't do that!" Hermione nearly squeaked.

"Why on earth not? If you are sorted separately, who knows where you might end up."

"It doesn't matter. Nobody's supposed to know about the bond. Well, apart from Professor Dumbledore, and McGonagall, and Flitwick, and the Weasleys..."

"Alright, you can stop. I get the picture. Hmm, plenty of brain. Knows quite a lot."

"I studied like mad so I could get into Ravenclaw," Hermione replied.

"Really?" The hat sounded interested. "Why's that?"

"Well, I want to learn everything possible and show that muggleborns are just as good as pure-bloods. Then I want to help the werewolves. I mean it's hardly fair that..."

"All right!" the hat nearly shouted in her head. The the hat yelled out loudly, "Slytherin!"

The Slytherins began to cheer, until they noticed the strange reaction from the head table and from Hermione herself.

It would be hard to tell who was most shocked by the hat's pronouncement, the Professors who knew Hermione, who were unable to keep the surprise from their faces, the Weasleys, who just stared at her, for once even the twins unable to think of a thing to say, Harry, who felt a lump in his throat and wanted to run up and give her an uncharacteristic hug, or Hermione herself, who remained sitting on the stool, unable to believe what she had just heard.

Finally, Professor McGonagall took the hat from Hermione and told her, "Miss Granger. Go and take your seat, please."

Still feeling half stunned, Hermione got down from the stool and walked over to the Slytherin table barely noticing the sorting as it continued, not even as Draco Malfoy was sorted into Slytherin and ended up sitting next to her. She didn't take any real notice of the continuing sorting until the name "Harry Potter" was called out.

"Ah. The other half. I had quite a conversation with your other half, you know."

"How could you put her in Slytherin?" Harry asked, outraged. "They hate muggleborns. She should be in Ravenclaw, she's clever enough."

"I put her where she belongs," the hat insisted, "and now we must see where you belong, as she refused to have you sorted together."

"You'd better put me in Slytherin," Harry said, reluctantly, hoping the Weasleys wouldn't hate him.

"But you don't want to be in Slytherin," the hat commented.

"Nor did Hermione."

"Very well." The the hat called out loudly, "Hufflepuff."

"You can't do that!" Harry argued.

"Harry. Your own words told me where you belong, just as hers did. You were terrified of being placed in Slytherin, but your loyalty to Hermione made you request it. Your strongest characteristic is your loyalty, Harry, just as Hermione's is her ambition and wanting to prove herself."

Before Harry could argue further, Professor McGonagall had removed the hat from his head and he was being welcomed warmly by the other Hufflepuffs.

Ron, as he had hoped, and everyone else had expected, was sorted into Gryffindor.

Neither Harry nor Hermione took much notice of Professor Dumbledore's speech or the announcement that Professor Quirrell had returned from his year away and would now be teaching Defence Against the Dark Arts as Charity Burbage, who had replaced him in teaching Muggle Studies the previous year, would be continuing in that position.

As Professor Quirrell sat back down and turned around to try to talk to the Professor sitting next to him, Harry noticed that the other professor was glaring at him. He felt a sudden pain in his scar and asked who that Professor was. "That's Snape," he was told. "He's head of Slytherin, teaches potions, but he's really interested in the Dark Arts."

Hermione had felt a sudden sharp headache for a moment and look over to Harry, but Harry seemed to be okay.



After the feast, Harry and Hermione didn't get a chance to speak to each other as they were led straight from their tables to their common rooms.

"So what do your parents do?" one of the other Slytherins asked Hermione, as they'd never heard of the Granger family.

"They're dentists," she answered.

"What's that?"

"They fix teeth," she explained.

"But the mediwitches do that."

"My parents are muggles," Hermione explained.

Malfoy overheard and she heard him whisper loudly to two large boys that seemed to follow him around, "A mudblood, in Slytherin. Wait till my father hears about this."

"What's a mudblood?" Hermione asked the girl nearest to her, but nobody would tell her.

After Draco's comment, she noticed that the others were quickly making excuses to leave and she was left alone.

She went to bed with tears down her face, the reaction of the others in Slytherin reminded her too much of her days in muggle school. "My first day and they hate me," she thought.

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Author's note...

Sorry for the old joke about the station. I couldn't resist.

Chapters 25 and 26 have now been beta'd and have been re-uploaded. Due to real life commitments Nachoman hasn't had time to beta this chapter. Any errors are completely mine.

Don't forget that the hp-lexicon, which is shut down at its old location, is currently back online at hplex and then the usual DOT org

Please note that unlike in canon, I checked the calender and therefore things like days of the week are accurate (as are things like moon phases, dates for Easter, etc.). Where canon is different, I have followed the correct day of the week for any date.

Please review.

Brian

THE STORY SO FAR – this is a quick reference for anyone wanting to refresh their memory, perhaps coming back to my story after a break.

The “Before Hogwarts” part is here.

A summary of each “Year” at Hogwarts will be at the end of the final chapter of each year. For example, for a summary of their first year at Hogwarts, see the bottom of the chapter 46.

At the bottom of the latest chapter to be published will be a summary of what has happened in that “Year” up to that point.

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Chapter 1 mid JULY 1988

(Hermione is 8 and Harry is 7)

Hermione rescues Harry, but in the hospital, they touch and fall unconscious.

Chapter 2 still mid July 1988

Dumbledore visits Harry and Hermione in hospital and discovers that they have a

soul bond

Chapter 3 still mid July 1988

The Grangers take Harry home for the first time. Dumbledore decides that Harry

must return to the Dursleys, but he is worried about Hermione.

Chapter 4 still mid July 1988

Harry is been told that he must return to the Dursleys.

Chapter 5 still mid July 1988

Dumbledore visits the Dursleys and takes Hermione to Diagon Alley

Chapter 6 mid July - 21st August 1988

The social worker visits Harry's school and meets the Dursleys.

Harry taken back to the Dursleys on Sunday 21st August.

Chapter 7 22nd - 31st August 1988

Hermione's first visit to Harry Wednesday 25th August. Dumbledore wonders if the

bond isn't taking.

Grangers visit Harry Saturday 27th August

Hermione visits Gringotts then the bookshop on Wednesday 31st August and buys a

book on bonds.

Chapter 8 Thursday 1st September - Saturday 10th September 1988

School started Thursday 1st September

Remus visited Saturday 3rd September

Hermione stuns everyone with her announcement about the Soul Bond breaking down.

Chapter 9 Saturday 10th September 1988

(4:49am on the 11th was full moon)

Harry hunts for and finds Hermione and they return home, but after overhearing

part of a conversation, he feels unwanted again.

Chapter 10 Sunday 11th September 1988

Harry asks to break the bond and Hermione confronts her parents about what they

said about Harry.

Chapter 11 Monday 12th September 1988 -

Dumbledore and Flitwick's visit Tuesday 13th September 1988

They have a bad night as Hermione dreams more of Harry's memories. Professor

Flitwick has been called in to help Harry and Hermione. He is taking them to get

their wands.

Chapter 12 Tuesday 13th September 1988 continued

Harry and Hermione get their wands and have their first magic lesson.  
Hermione

buys Hedwig

He named Hedwig after a name in his "History of Magic" book.

The Sisters of St. Hedwig is an order of nuns founded in 1859 (St. Hedwig was

canonised in 1266 by Pope Clement IV; ). The sisters work in Germany, Austria, and

Denmark. Their work focuses on educating orphans.

Chapter 13 End of Tues 13th, Wednesday 14th September 1988

Water fights, problems with wands and Hermione got stung protecting Harry.

Professor Flitwick's training has begun to have an effect.

Chapter 14 Thursday 15th September 1988

Hermione has a talk with her dad and they find out they've missed Harry's birthday

Chapter 15 Friday 16th - Saturday 17th September 1988

They have a day out and meet the Weasley twins

Chapter 16 Sunday 18th September 1988

Dumbledore begins to teach them Legilimency

Chapter 17 Monday 19th September 1988

Hermione's 9th birthday party which she shares with Harry They meet Ginny and Ron

Weasley

Chapter 18 Tuesday 20th September 1988

First day at School!

Chapter 19 Wednesday 21st September 1988

They dream Hermione's dreams for the first time and Miss Collier pays a visit

Chapter 20 Wednesday 21st September 1988

Miss Collier was Obliviated after a row between the Grangers and Professor

Dumbledore

Chapter 21 Thursday 22nd September 1988

(also flashback to the night before)

Hogwarts Staff tell Dumbledore he needs to earn Grangers' trust, Mrs Granger

studies the book on obliviation and Mr Granger admits to his fear of losing

Hermione. Ron and Ginny get permission to join the training.

Chapter 22 Friday 23rd September 1988

Mr. Granger talked with Mr. Weasley about his fears for the future. Harry uses

magic to defend Hermione after school.

Chapter 23 end of Friday, Saturday 24th September 1988

Mr. Granger talked with Miss Collier. The Weasley parents talk about parents of

Muggleborns. Harry pranks the twins.

Chapter 24 Saturday 24th September 1988

Hermione tells the Ginny about Harry's past and their bond and Ginny almost tells

her that they are married. Ginny lets slip about Harry's past to everyone.

Duelling with the Weasleys.

Chapter 25 Sunday 25th September 1988

(full moon)

The twins prank Harry and Hermione, Ginny discovers that Harry and Hermione sleep

together. Miss Collier tests the Weasley children.

Chapter 26 Wednesday 19th September 1990

Hermione's eleventh birthday. Mrs Granger looks back over the last two years and

Hermione chooses a school.

Chapter 27 19th September 1990 continued - Sunday 1st September 1991

Hermione organises a Parent Teacher Association. Hermione and Harry go to

Hogwarts are are sorted into Slytherin and Hufflepuff respectively.

For a summary of their first year at Hogwarts, see the bottom of the chapter 46.



The Harmony bond, chapter twenty-eight.

Author's note:-

Thank you to those of you who are still here and instead of the knee-jerk reaction, gave me at least enough credit to want to see where I was going with this. Needless to say there was a reason for that sorting which will begin to become apparent in this chapter. There's at least one other reason as well, which won't be apparent quite so quickly. Ironically, alongside those who say they'll abandon reading the story, this update has seen the most "Favorite Story/Author" or "Story/Author Alerts" of any chapter since chapter one.

Note – I take more notice of people who review regularly, than people who are consistently too lazy to review (like me!) until they want to complain about something.

To those criticising me in Yahoo groups (which I don't even know but have been told about) without even telling me and thus denying me the right to defend myself, feel free to abandon my story. I guess you obviously aren't Gryffindor material. If you want a story that won't challenge your preconceptions, go find some fluff somewhere.

To the one who complained about me making Harry a "useless puff", I can only remind you that Cedric Diggory, chosen as the most powerful wizard in school by the goblet of fire, was Hufflepuff. Only Slytherins like Malfoy think that Hufflepuffs are useless.

By the way, the school timetable I am using is from Mike (MoA), downloaded from the Lexicon. Thanks for your work Mike, though a school day starting at 8am, in England?!!!

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to She Who Must Not Be Named, her various publishers and a certain film company.

In the previous chapter...

Hermione organises a Parent Teacher Association. Hermione and Harry go to Hogwarts and are sorted into Slytherin and Hufflepuff respectively.

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After he'd been taken with the other first years to the Hufflepuff common room, Harry found himself being treated as a celebrity. He could feel something like a wave of sadness and wasn't sure where it was coming from. It felt like when he'd first known Hermione and she'd been upset for some reason, but he was sure it couldn't be, they'd always had to be close to each other to get a sense of what the other was feeling.

He was beginning to wish that Hermione had chosen another school, even the French one would be better. At home and in the Weasley Junior School, as the Grangers had insisted on calling it, he'd been just Harry. Here, it was obvious that he was "The Boy Who Lived". Everyone had been asking him if any of the books were true and a one of the even less tactful ones, an older boy, had asked him what You-Know-Who was like, as if he could remember.

For the first time in ages, one of his old dreams came back to him, his mother's scream as a green light he now knew to be the Avada Kedavra curse. But that scene soon changed to thoughts of Hermione. He was sure it was true, he could feel her, just like when they were close. He could feel a real fear that nobody in Slytherin would accept her and nobody else would like her any more because she was in Slytherin.

Without thinking, he told her in his mind, "I'll always be your friend, you know that."

A feeling of being startled disrupted the sadness. "Harry?"

"Yes."

"Is this really happening? You're talking to me in my mind? I read about this, but never thought it would happen until we were older."

"But we've never been able to talk like this. We can't even dream together unless we are together..."

"Well, when we were first bonding, I felt your dreams even though you were away at the Dursleys, but I thought that was just part of the bonding process. I'll have to read about this."

"Did you bring your book on the bond?"

Harry was amused as he felt her feeling about him asking a stupid question. He laughed in his mind. "Silly question, huh?"

"Just a bit. I wonder if this only happens when we're asleep."

"I'm sure you'll find a chapter on it."

"Very funny."

"Are they treating you all right? In Slytherin, I mean."

"They were okay till they found out I'm muggleborn," she replied. "Now they're just ignoring me."

Hermione was obviously trying to pass that off as unimportant and with anyone else it might have worked. Harry, however, could feel her hurt, bringing back, for her, memories of being ignored by classmates in her muggle schools.

Harry spent most of the night in their dreams doing the best he could to comfort and reassure Hermione. He couldn't wait to see her at breakfast.

When Hermione came down to breakfast she seemed to be smiling and she gave him a quick wave, but it didn't need their bond to tell him that her smile was fixed. After a few minutes, it was obvious that nobody was going to sit near her, so Harry picked up his plate and walked over to Ron. "I'm going to sit with Hermione. Are you coming?"

Ron looked stunned. "But she's a Slytherin."

"I thought she was also your friend," Harry replied with undisguised disgust. "How many times has she helped you with lessons?"

Harry turned away and walked towards Hermione, when Ron called. "Wait! I'm coming. I don't know what the other snakes'll say though."

Hermione was looking down and picking at her food when they got there and hadn't seen them coming.

"Hi, Hermione."

Hermione's face brightened. "Are you allowed to sit here?" she asked.

Ron rolled his eyes. "Nobody else is keeping you company, so who's going to object?"

"Him, for one," said Harry, looking at Malfoy, who was walking towards them.

"Why don't you take your mudblood with you?" he suggested.

Ron reached for his wand and Draco did the same.

"Now, Now, Draco. Play nicely."

Hermione looked up to see the twins.

"Don't mind if we join you three, do you?" said Fred, smoothly.

"We couldn't find anyone worthy of a good pranking at our table." moaned George, then, turning to Malfoy, added, "Any volunteers?"

Malfoy went back to his place, muttering angrily.

"You know, George?"

"Yes, Fred. I think someone's told him about us."

"Dashed unsporting, old chap."

"Well, they are snakes. And talking of snakes, how's our favourite serpent today?"

Hermione looked momentarily angry, then smiled. "I'm okay."

"That's good. I thought she was going to bite you there, George."

"Nah. Snakes eat frogs and toads don't they?"

"Better keep her away from Neville, then," said Ron.

"Who?" asked Hermione.

"Neville Longbottom. A kid in my dorm. He's always losing his toad."

At this point they were interrupted by a older Slytherin called Marcus Flint. "Get back to your own table."

"Is there a problem here, Flint?"

"No," Flint replied shortly, before going back to his place.

"Percy, I never thought I'd say this..." George began.

"...but we're actually pleased to see you."

"Well, if that's how you feel."

"Shut up, you two," snapped Hermione. "Thank you, Percy. I appreciate you coming over even if they don't."

"Thank you."

The twins looked as if they were about to start teasing Percy again, but a glare from Hermione changed their mind.

"So how are they treating you in Slytherin?" Harry asked her.

"They're just ignoring me, like I don't exist," she replied.

"Best thing," said Ron, "you can ignore them too."

The conversation went on, with the twins seemingly determined to cheer Hermione up, while Harry could hardly wait for the first lesson to begin. Gryffindor had Transfiguration with Ravenclaw, while Slytherin and Hufflepuff had a free period until their own Transfiguration lesson in the second period. Harry was beginning to regret inviting Ron over with him as he desperately wanted to talk to Hermione alone.

Finally Ron got up to go. That gave Harry an excuse to get up too, otherwise the twins, who also had a free period, showed every sign of staying to chat longer.

"Got time for a walk?" Harry asked her.

Hermione nodded, so they walked outside. They both started to speak at once.

"You first," said Harry.

"Did we really dream together last night, like we used to, or was I imagining it?"

"Yeah. I thought I was imagining it."

"I wonder if we can talk like that when we're awake?"

"Why do we need to?"

Ignoring his question, she said, "Let's try now. I'm going to think something."

Harry thought for a moment. "Nothing."

Hermione looked disappointed, so Harry replied, "It's a pity you're not Ron. I know what his thought would be. Food"

Hermione giggled. "We've just had breakfast."

"Since when would that stop him?" After an awkward pause, Harry asked her, "Are you really okay?"

"Yeah. I miss our old school, though."

"I think... I wish you'd chosen another school now."

They were interrupted suddenly by another voice. "Well, hello you two. What are you doing out here?" It was Hagrid, the huge man who had led them to the castle the night before.

"We wanted some time alone," replied Harry, truthfully.

"Oh, if I'm interrupting..."

Hermione glared at Harry and said, "No, Hagrid. It's okay. It's just that being in different houses, we don't get to see each other very easily."

"I don't understand why the hat put Hermione in Slytherin," moaned Harry.

"Yeah, well," said Hagrid. "All the staff have been talking about that, too. I mean, there ain't a wizard or witch gone bad who wasn't in Slytherin."

"That's not true," said Hermione. "What about Sirius Black?"

"Who?" asked Harry.

"Sirius Black. Sorry, Harry, I know you don't like reading about yourself, but I wanted to know what happened. Sirius Black was your father's best friend and he betrayed them to Voldemort."

"Don't say the name," said Hagrid.

"Anyhow. Sirius Black was in Gryffindor, so it's not true that all dark wizards are in Slytherin," Hermione finished triumphantly.

Hagrid gave a grudging acknowledgement to that then said, "They was all shocked, especially as you're a, you know, muggleborn. I didn't think they'd like muggleborns there."

"They don't," said Harry. "They're all ignoring her."

Hagrid looked sorry for her.

"Hagrid," Hermione asked, "What's a mudblood?"

He looked startled at her question, "You shouldn't use that word."

She explained, "Only Malfoy called me that and I don't know what it means."

Hagrid looked furious. "He shouldn' done that. It means dirty blood, a nasty name for muggleborns."

"Hermione's parents aren't dirty," protested Harry, "and nor is Hermione. They rescued me from the Dursleys, after all."

"The Dursleys? I thought you lived with them."

"Hermione rescued me..." but he was interrupted.

"Sorry, Hagrid, but we've got to be getting back," Hermione said.

"We've got ages yet."

"We've got to go and get our books," said Hermione. "We'll see you again, Hagrid."

"Any time, Hermione, Harry."

As they walked back to the castle, Harry asked, "Why did you interrupt me?"

"Well, we have got to get our books."

"What's the real reason?"



"I thought nobody was supposed to know about you being at the Dursleys, so how come he does?"

"Right."

"I just think we should find out before you tell him any more."

"Okay."

"See you in class in a minute."

"Okay. Er. Hermione. Are you really okay?"

"Yeah, I'm okay."

She walked off to the dungeons.

Harry found their first lesson, Transfiguration, with Professor McGonagall, not as exciting as he'd hoped, except for the start, when there had only been a cat on the desk, which jumped down and changed into the Professor herself.

Hermione, however, was thrilled that she'd managed to get a pointed end on the matchstick she was supposed to be changing into a needle, and even got it to look more silvery.

"Well done, Miss Granger," Professor McGonagall said. "Ten points to Slytherin."

Instead of looking pleased, Hermione's fellow Slytherins just looked furious at her.

At the end of the lesson, Professor McGonagall said, "Hermione. One moment please."

When the others, including Harry, had gone, she said, "I won't keep you long. I don't want to make you late for potions with my Gryffindors. How are they treating you in Slytherin?"

"Okay. They're just ignoring me."

"If it becomes any more than that, tell someone. Come to me if you have to."

"Thank you, Professor."

Harry was waiting for her in the corridor. "What did she want?"

"Just asking if I was okay."

"I guess Hagrid was right. They are worried. You will be careful, won't you?"

"Aren't I always?"

Harry didn't justify that with an answer.

Hermione's next lesson, potions, was with Gryffindor, and to her surprise, Ron came to sit with her.

"Thank you," she said. "Knowing how anti-Slytherin you are, I didn't think you'd want to know me any more."

"Yeah, er... Well, Harry kinda pointed out. You're still Hermione."

Hermione rewarded him with a hug which would have completely embarrassed him even if it hadn't have been for Professor Snape walking in at that moment and shouting "Ten points from Gryffindor, Mr. Weasley. There will be no hugging in my class."

"But that's not fair. It was me that hugged him," Hermione protested.

"Make that twenty points. Any further outburst from you, Miss Granger and I'll give you both detention."

"We won't go. You've no right to do that."

"I have every right, Miss Granger, and I suggest you remember which house you belong to and where your loyalties should lie. Detention for both of you, with me, tonight."

Hermione angrily stood up, picked up her book, and to the amazement of everyone, including herself, walked out of the classroom.

She walked quickly until she was outside the castle. She forced herself to breathe slowly and deeply to try to control her anger and upset.

In the first year Hufflepuff boys' dormitory Harry was reading on his bed when he felt a tremendous burst of anger and frustration. He leapt from his bed and ran out the door.

He had to get outside. One of the stairways began to move to obstruct him and in frustration he swore at it. To his amazement, it moved back to let him continue his journey downwards.

He ran outside and was immediately attacked by a bushy brown haired missile. "You came," she cried as she hugged him tightly. "I was just wishing."

"I could feel how angry you were."

In an instant the studious Hermione replaced the emotional one. Releasing the hug, she faced him. "You could? Where were you?"

"In my dorm. Why?"

"This is the first time, right?"

"Well, no. Last night, before our dream, I could feel you were upset."

"Let me get this right. That was while you were still awake, is that right?"

Harry grinned, amazed how easy it had been to take Hermione's mind off of whatever had upset her. "Yes, Hermione. Now are you

going to tell me what made you so upset? Wait a minute. Didn't you have a lesson?"

"Professor Snape picked on Ron because I hugged him, and that was before the lesson even started."

"You hugged Ron?"

"Yes. Anyway, when I said something, he gave us both detention, so I walked out. It just isn't fair."

"You walked out of a lesson?"

Hermione nodded.

Harry pulled out his wand and pointed it at her. "Who are you and what have you done with Hermione?"

Hermione laughed. "What do you think I should do? I mean, he is my head of house, so if I don't go to detention he's bound to do something."

"We'll have to go to see Dumbledore, or McGonagall. I'll go with you this evening."

"Okay, but what's this about you being able to feel what I'm feeling? Can you do it all the time or only when I'm upset? Can you actually hear what I'm thinking? What is it like?"

"Whoa! Too many questions. I think I can only feel it was you're upset or really angry, like today. And it's like I'm feeling it myself, yet I know I'm not, it's difficult to describe."

"And can you actually hear my thoughts yet?"

"No. What do you mean, yet?"

"Well, in a complete soul bond they can speak to each other in their minds. We haven't done that yet, except when we're asleep."

"So when you want to send me a message, you'll have to send an owl telling me to go to sleep?"

Hermione punched him lightly. "Silly."

They stayed together until lunchtime and once again Harry sat with Hermione, after Hermione had run over to Ron to apologise for getting him into trouble.

"Don't worry," Ron had replied. "Everyone knows he's a greasy git that hates Gryffindors."

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Author's note...

I wanted to post this immediately, so my apologies to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez for not giving you a chance to get at it first, but I know you're really busy right now.

Thanks also to the hp-lexicon, which is shut down at its old location, but is currently back online at hplex and then the usual DOT org

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter twenty-nine.

Author's note...

IMPORTANT – To those who are worried by the last few paragraphs of this chapter, please read the author's note at the end before jumping down my throat!

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to She Who Must Not Be Named, her various publishers and a certain film company.

In the previous chapter...

Harry and Hermione talk in their dreams. Hermione rows with Snape and Harry senses her feelings from his dormitory.

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After lunch, Harry had Herbology while Hermione had History of Magic, which the Slytherins shared with Ravenclaw.

Professor Binns was boring. There was no other word for it, even Hermione had to admit. Even most of the Ravenclaws were either nodding off or reading something else. At least, they were at first.

About three quarters of the way through the lesson, Hermione suddenly felt something wet hit her face. She rubbed where it had hit and her finger was smeared with blue ink. A minute later there was another, then another, while she tried desperately to make notes on the lesson, until her white blouse and presumably her face, was spotted with blue.

The Ravenclaws were awake now, watching with fascination as the Slytherins attacked one of their own.

Hermione heard laughter from behind and swung around, to find that someone had dipped the ends of her hair in ink.

As the lesson ended, Malfoy passed her desk and knocked it, sending her ink bottle over her notes and the ink dripping down onto her skirt. "So sorry, Granger. It was an accident, you know?"

Hermione seriously thought about going to the dorm to clean up, but didn't want to miss her first Herbology lesson. She knew, after all, how important could a first lesson be.

"Are you all right, Miss Granger?" asked professor Sprout, after seeing her enter in such a mess.

"I'm fine, thank you, Professor."

"Let's get the worst of that ink off of you." She waved her wand over the places with most ink and it almost completely disappeared, leaving just slightly blue marks on her face, blouse and hair.

The Herbology lesson went well enough that Hermione was glad she'd decided not to miss it.

But at the end of the lesson, as they were leaving, a sudden shove from behind meant that she ended up in a pile of something which smelled foul.

"Oh, look," cried Draco with delight, when he saw what had happened, "The mudblood's in the mud."

"Not mud," Pansy corrected him. "She smells even worse than usual now."

"Mr Malfoy, Miss Parkinson, ten points each from Slytherin. And for using that word, Mr. Malfoy, you can come back this evening and give manure to all the plants in Greenhouse one."

"I didn't push her," Draco protested.

"I know you didn't, or you'd be facing worse than a detention. Miss Granger, did you see who pushed you?"

"No, Professor."

"Very well. Just be warned. I will not tolerate bullying in my class and I will be having words with Professor Snape about this."

Hermione thought she heard someone snigger at that.

The Professor magically cleaned off the worst again, then told her, "I'm afraid you'll still need a shower."

"That's okay. That's where I'm planning on going."

When she reached the Slytherin Common Room, she found Professor Snape there. "Miss Granger. I understand that you don't get on with your fellow Slytherins, but Slytherins stick together when outside of this house. Keep your private squabbles to yourselves and stop making this house into a laughing stock." Before she could reply, he added, "That goes for all of you," and swept out.

Hermione was letting the anger simmer with the hot water, but then an explosion, made almost deafening by the confines of the bathroom, brought her crashing down back to Earth. Then she pulled aside the shower curtain, just in time for a piece of something foul-smelling to hit her in the chest.

As she stepped out of the shower, she slipped and fell. The entire floor of the shower room, was covered in mud. Worse still, somebody had brought all her clean clothes from her room and thrown them on the dirty floor.

Hermione put on the dirty clothes she had just taken off, the only ones not totally covered in the wet, sticky mud, and gathered her clothes. She put all the dirty clothes in the huge basket for the purpose and went outside. Gathering up the muddy clothes had made the clothes she was wearing even dirtier. She wasn't surprised when Harry soon joined her. "What happened?" he asked, angrily. "And what's that awful smell?"



Hermione briefly explained, then, "Where are you going?"

"To send an owl to mum and dad," he replied.

"You'll just worry them. It's better they don't know."

Harry ignored her and walked off. Once he'd sent the owl, he went back outside to find Hermione sitting on the grass. "I think you should tell McGonagall," he said.

"Professor McGonagall," she corrected automatically.

Harry smiled. She obviously couldn't be that upset. "Whatever. You should see her anyway."

"What can she do? Professor Snape's head of Slytherin and he just told them off for doing things in front of other houses."

"Well, if you're still not going to detention with that prat tonight, you need to see someone anyway."

"Yeah. I suppose."

"Are you coming to dinner like that?"

"These are the cleanest clothes I've got, and the only dry ones," she pointed out. "And if anyone doesn't like it, including PROFESSOR Snape, then tough."

Harry smiled at her.

When they entered the dining hall, the effect on others was noticeable. They edged further away from Hermione than usual.

Only Fred and George came over to Hermione and Harry. "I smell the er... aroma of a dungbomb." one of them said.

"So that's what it is," replied Hermione.

"Nasty things, dungbombs. We'd never use them to prank anyone, would we, Fred?"

"Of course not, George. We'd never do a thing like that. It would be too cruel."

"That's right, so you'd best get up early and leave the Slytherin dorms tomorrow."

"Do I want to know what you're planning?" Hermione asked, beginning to feel a little more cheerful at last.

"Us? Planning? Never."

"And just how do you get into Slytherin anyway?"

"Trade secret, that is, isn't it, George?"

"Yup. I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you."

"I'm not sure I want to know what you are talking about," came the firm tones of Professor McGonagall, "but I do want to know what's happened to you, Miss Granger. You really can't come into dinner in that state. When you've told me what's happened, you can go and shower and change. Some food will be saved for you."

"I can't. All the rest of my clothes are wet and muddy."

Professor McGonagall's eyes narrowed dangerously. "What happened today? I want to know all of it."

"Don't forget Snape this morning," Harry reminded Hermione.

The Professor was about to say something when Hermione turned to Harry and said "Professor Snape," so Professor McGonagall had to cover her mouth to avoid them seeing her smile with amusement. Harry might be something special in the wizarding world, but Hermione seemed determined not to let it go to his head.

"There's no point. Professor Snape is head of Slytherin, so you can't do anything."

"I think as Deputy Headmistress, I might have a little influence in this school," Professor McGonagall replied smoothly.

"When Ron came over to sit with me when nobody else would, I gave him a hug. So Professor Snape..." Hermione managed to make Professor sound like a swear word... "took ten points from Ron. When I said that was unfair, he doubled it, then gave us both detention. So I told him I'm not going to do his detention and walked out of his class."

"Hmm. While I don't agree with what he did, you should still do his detention."

"She's not gonna be punished for doing nothing wrong," said Harry. "I told her to see Dum... Professor Dumbledore."

"I will have a word with him. In the meantime, that doesn't explain the state you are in."

Hermione briefly described the events of the afternoon's lessons and Professor Snape telling them all off afterwards for making the house a laughing stock and not sorting out their squabbles in private.

Harry hadn't heard that bit before and he looked ready to explode. "So it's okay to bully you if nobody else knows about it."

When Hermione told about what happened afterwards when she was in the shower, Professor McGonagall looked almost as angry as Harry.

She cast a few cleaning spells on Hermione. "I'll ensure your clothes are cleaned and returned to you at once."

Without saying anything further to Hermione she walked to the head table and had a word with Professor Snape. The whole school stopped to look as the two teachers left the hall, some students muttering about the unaccustomed look of thunder on the face of Professor McGonagall. As she reached the door, she called out. "Mr.

Weasley, Miss Granger, you are to report to me with your books at seven thirty. Oh, and Mr. Weasley. Fifty points for overcoming prejudice." A stunned Professor Snape followed her out of the door.

To Hermione's amazement, when she got back upstairs half an hour later, she heard a small popping sound and found her clothes washed, dried and folded neatly on her bed.

She still wasn't happy about Ron and her having to do a detention, but there would hardly be a single Gryffindor or Slytherin that wouldn't hear about what had happened and that Professor McGonagall had effectively overruled Professor Snape's punishment. Even though she still thought any detention was unfair, especially for Ron, she felt that she owed it to Professor McGonagall to go anyway.

As she had guessed, and hoped, the Professor spent the two hours taking them through any points either of them were finding difficult in any of their lessons. She was extremely well read, even on the subjects which she didn't teach. Even Ron tried his best not to be too annoyed at having to study the extra hours.

She managed to see Harry briefly before bedtime. For once he didn't object when she gave him a huge hug. When she released him, he asked her, "Are you all right?"

She nodded.

"You're not."

She looked annoyed at him contradicting her, then snapped, "So I'm scared, all right? It's stupid, it's not like they could really do anything bad. I... I just wish I was you, that's all."

"Me?" asked Harry incredulously.

"Yes, you. If I were you, they'd never let anything happen."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you remember? Back before we started the school, and we were all arguing with Dumbledore about obliviation..."

"No," Harry replied. "I don't have a computer for a brain."

"Actually," Hermione pointed out, "the human brain is much superior to a computer. Anyhow, whether you remember or not, I said to Dumbledore that you were important somehow, that's why he wouldn't risk obliviating us both."

"What did he say?"

"He didn't admit it, but he didn't deny it, either. Harry, it all makes sense, the training, the support for the school, the way he let you choose a school... He was trying to make you trust him... You're important somehow. For some reason, he needs you, desperately. But I'm just the know-it-all that got in the way. If anything happened to me, well I don't think anyone here would miss me much."

Hermione said all this quite calmly, but it was the fact that Hermione missed something obvious which told Harry just how upset she was. "Hermione, we're bonded. If you die, I die. They can't let that happen to you."

Hermione brightened a little. "That's true."

"Get up early tomorrow and I'll meet you twenty minutes before breakfast, okay, Her?"

"Okay," she laughed, "but don't think you can get away with calling me Her."

There was a minor irritation when she tried to get into bed, her bed had been apple-pied, meaning that the sheet had been rearranged in a way that she couldn't get into it properly. It took a minute, while the other girls in her dorm sniggered, for her to remake the bed.

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It was ten minutes before breakfast and Hermione hadn't arrived. Harry felt himself beginning to panic. This wasn't like Hermione.

Five minutes before breakfast and Hermione still hadn't arrived. Walking outside, Harry desperately tried to remember the technique Professor Dumbledore had taught them to reach each other's minds, but they hadn't practised it since their bond had stabilised and become safe. That was almost two years, and they had always been close to each other, or even touching, then.

"Hermione! Hermione!" he said in his mind, desperately searching for her. Nothing.

He barely noticed the twins come into the hall. "Oh, Hi, Harry. You didn't see anything okay?"

"What?" Harry replied with frustration.

"We're going to prank the snakes."

"Forget it. Hermione's in trouble. I'm going to Slytherin. Go and get Dumbledore or McGonagall or someone."

The twins stared at him for a moment as if he were crazy, then George spoke up, "Fred, go get McGonagall. I'm going with Harry."

Still concentrating as they left the hall, Harry finally heard something. "Harry? Is that you?"

Almost tripping over with relief, Harry asked her, "Are you all right?"

"No. I can't move or see and I'm itching all over."

"I'm coming for you."

"You'll never get into Slytherin."

"I'll get in somehow."

George was looking at him strangely. "I'm talking to her. She's hurt." With that they ran the rest of the way.

But when Harry and George reached the door, it remained stubbornly closed to them. Even after Hermione passed the password to Harry ("Pureblood"), the door just growled "Not Slytherin" at them. "I'm going to try my shield spell. Remember? It knocked those boys flying."

A feeble shield came from his wand.

"We had to hold hands, remember?" Hermione pointed out.

"Hermione. Think shield, now," ordered Harry.

This time a huge orange disc battered against the Slytherin door, but it held.

"It's working! Again, Hermione. Shield. Now!"

This time the shield didn't so much as open the door as blow it to smithereens. The Slytherins in the common room stared at the angry first year who had just done what was supposed to be impossible and wisely stayed away from him. His anger hadn't dimmed in the slightest as he ran, following directions given by Hermione.

He reached her dorm and found her motionless on the bed, staring at the ceiling, seeing nothing, every exposed part of skin covered with some kind of sores. Nobody else was in the dorm.

He'd found her, but then he realised that he didn't have any idea whatsoever to do to help her. He looked at George.

George shook his head. "I think we'd better wait for McGonagall."

"Don't worry, Hermione. Fred's gone for McGonagall," Harry told her.

It was only a few minutes before Professor McGonagall came rushing into the room. She took one look at Hermione, then at Harry. "Don't worry, Harry. She'll be all right."

"No thanks to anyone at Hogwarts," Harry replied, acidly.

"I'm going to take her to the hospital wing. Madam Pomfrey will soon put her right. You can come with her, of course."

"Not yet," said Harry, to the professor's surprise. "I have something else to do first." To Hermione, he said, "I'm going to see Dumbledore. I'll see you in a few minutes."

"No, Harry," Hermione replied. "I can feel you. You need to eat after that. And then probably sleep a while. See me later."

"I'll see you after breakfast, then I can sleep afterwards."

Hermione didn't argue, knowing that that was the best compromise she was going to get.

On their way up from Slytherin, they met Professor Dumbledore. Harry rounded on him angrily, "Happy now?"

"Harry, I..."

"Forget it. Just get her out of Slytherin, now."

"I don't have any control over the sorting, Harry. I will speak with Professor Snape."

"Hermione reminded me of something last night. That, for some reason you won't tell us, I'm important somehow. So important that you've bent over backwards to gain our trust the last two years so we'd come here."

"Harry, now is not the time..."

"Get her out of Slytherin by tonight or we're both out of here. And we won't be coming back."

"Headmaster," George interrupted.



"Yes, Mr. Weasley."

"Whatever you're hiding about Harry... It's to do with... I mean, you think You-Know-Who is coming back, don't you?"

"Yes," Professor Dumbledore admitted. "I believe Voldemort will return, some day."

"Well, I saw what Harry did to the Slytherin door. You allow anything to happen to Hermione, I think Voldemort will be the least of your problems."

Professor Dumbledore looked at Professor McGonagall.

"The door was totally destroyed. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it. I didn't even know you knew any demolition spells, Mr. Potter."

"I don't, Professor. That was a shield spell."

Harry made his way to breakfast. When he entered the Great Hall, it fell silent, everyone looking nervously at Harry. Obviously, word of what he had done in Slytherin had got round.

Finally, Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall came in and began to eat. As they did so, an owl dropped a small red envelope in front of Professor Dumbledore.

It opened itself and began to shout in the familiar voice of Molly Weasley. "Albus Dumbledore. Arthur and the Grangers and I have discussed this. You get that poor girl away from those bullying Slytherins today, or I'll be coming tomorrow to take Hermione, Harry, Percy, Fred, George and Ron away. The Grangers are making arrangements today to formally adopt Harry to ensure that they can take him away. And I can't see any other Muggles risking sending their children to Hogwarts either." The voice finally softened. "Oh, and Ron. Congratulations for making Gryffindor."

It was hard to tell who was more embarrassed, Ron or Professor Dumbledore.

Professor McGonagall finished her breakfast quickly and stood up, walked behind the central chair and whispered loudly over Dumbledore's shoulder, "If you don't take Miss Granger out of Slytherin, you'll have succeeded where Salazar Slytherin failed, in keeping Muggleborns out of Hogwarts."

After breakfast, Harry went to visit Hermione, while Professors Dumbledore, McGonagall, Snape, Flitwick and Sprout went to the headmaster's office to discuss the problem of Hermione Granger.

"She's as bad as Potter, arrogant, thinks she's better than everybody else and above the rules."

"Perhaps if you concentrated on stopping bullying and didn't encourage it by picking on students in your classes, the situation might not have arisen," suggested Professor McGonagall.

"Professors, we are not here to argue, we are here to make a decision about a girl's future," Professor Dumbledore reminded them. "Firstly, Severus, have you found out who was behind it?"

"Not yet. I spoke briefly to the girls who shared her dorm. They knew nothing. I believe they had been obliviated."

"That would suggest a senior student, and an able one at that."

"So would the complexity of the spells used," agreed Professor McGonagall. "But this is getting us nowhere. Are we going to resort Miss Granger?"

Albus stood in front of the sorting hat. "My decision remains the same," the hat said. "I have sorted Hermione Granger to Slytherin until things change."

"What is that supposed to mean?" asked Professor Snape in frustration. "What things?"

But the hat remained silent and would say no more.

"It appears that I am left with no choice. Please arrange for Miss Granger's things to be placed in Ravenclaw."

"Out of interest, how often has the headmaster had to place someone and overrule the sorting hat?" Professor Flitwick asked.

"To the best of my knowledge, never," replied Professor Dumbledore.

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Madam Pomfrey had, with her usual efficiency, reversed all of the spells affecting Hermione and allowed her to go to dinner that night.

As she walked to her place in the great hall with Harry at her side, Professor Dumbledore stood up and called out, "Miss Granger. Wrong table. I'm afraid that I have placed you in Ravenclaw, for the time being."

If Hermione thought her troubles were over, she was sadly mistaken. As far as the other Ravenclaws were concerned she was a Slytherin. That was where the sorting hat had placed her, and it was only Professor Dumbledore, not the sorting hat, who had changed that.

On her second evening in Ravenclaw, she was sure she had a book missing, as well as her pyjamas and she intended to confront the others about them. But as she was about to walk into the common room, she overheard herself being discussed. "I know she's clever, but I just don't trust her," said one.

"Yeah, I mean the hat reads minds. There must be some reason it placed her in Slytherin."

"There you go! Everyone knows that the hat never places Muggleborns there."

"She must really be a monster of a Slytherin, then. I don't want my sister to have her throat slit on her bed."

"I want to know what the hat knows about her that we don't..."

Hermione couldn't bear to hear any more and turned around and went back up to her bed, crying.

Her only comfort was the fact that she and Harry could now talk to each other in their minds easily whenever they wanted to. Hermione had already made Harry run outside to the edge of the grounds to see if distance affected their communication. So far it hadn't, though of course, they hadn't had the opportunity to test really long distances.

Immediately Harry left the Hufflepuff quarters and went to find Professor Dumbledore. To his surprise, the gargoyle guarding the stairway to the headmaster's office moved aside to allow him in. When he was about to knock the door opened by itself as Professor Dumbledore said, "Good evening, Harry. Did you want something?"

"Professor, I was wondering if I could ask the sorting hat something?"

The old Professor smiled. "Of course, Harry. I rather think that you are expected. I will leave you alone for a moment or two."

The next morning there was a stool in front of the head table. Professor Dumbledore stood up to make an announcement. "The sorting hat has asked to join us this morning." He waved his arm towards the stool and the sorting hat appeared. "Would Mr. Potter and Miss Granger please come up here?"

Hermione looked surprised, but Harry just gave her a smile.

It was a squeeze fitting them both on the stool, but fitting the hat around them both was easy, as it magically grew in width until it could rest over both their heads together.

"That's better," the hat said. "How can I possibly sort a bonded married couple when you aren't together?"

"Married?" Hermione squeaked.

"Of course," the hat replied.

In shock, Hermione pulled off the hat and ran out of the Great Hall, leaving a stunned Harry still sitting on the stool alone.

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Author's note...

IMPORTANT – To those who are worried, a soul bond may constitute a wizarding marriage LEGALLY, but that does NOT mean that you can expect them to be shagging at age 11 or anything like it.

So they are to be resorted together. At this point, when this chapter was first posted I asked readers to review and suggest where they should be sorted AND WHY. That poll is now closed.

Before anyone posts a review saying that the Grangers adopting Harry would make it impossible for them to marry, under English and Scottish Law, both in the 1990s when the story is set, and under the new Acts of Parliament in the early 2000s, adoptive siblings can marry legally. I know this is different to the situation in many of the U.S. states.

Nachoman says: “besides, we aren’t only talking about marriage in the modern legal sense, but as an arranged marriage, arranged and signed by magic itself. They will always be so close to each other that anybody who comes to marry either of them will be effectively marrying the two of them, and they’ll never trust anybody as deeply as they trust each other, so the actual paper is just a formality.”

Thanks to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter thirty.

Author's note:-

Sugar Warning! Diabetics please avoid this chapter! Serious sweetness ahead!

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to She Who Must Not Be Named, her various publishers and a certain film company.

In the previous chapter...

Hermione is repeatedly attacked in Slytherin and placed into Ravenclaw, where they are suspicious of her. The sorting hat announces that they are married.

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Harry wasn't the only one that was stunned. All around the hall murmuring could be heard... "Married? How?"

The teachers were just as surprised, though for different reasons. Most had no more idea about Harry and Hermione being bonded than the students, while Professors McGonagall, Flitwick and Dumbledore were surprised by Hermione's reaction.

"They have a soul bond?" Professor Snape asked Professor Dumbledore.

"They have had for over two years," Professor Dumbledore replied.

"Trust a Potter to show off and do something that's never been done at his age."

Professor Sprout, who was looking over at the stool where Harry still sat thunderstruck, turned back to face Professor Snape and snapped, "Severus. For once in your life, shut up."

She went down to the stool and took Harry's hand. "Harry, come with me."

Harry got up and followed her without a word. She led him to the nearest classroom and closed the door.

"Are you all right, Harry?" she asked.

Harry just nodded slightly.

"You don't look all right. Was the idea of being married such a shock?"

"Huh? No. I... I guess I knew really. They said we'd always be together."

"Then why are you so obviously upset?" asked the Professor, puzzled at his reaction.

"She didn't know, did she?" It didn't take the Professor much to work out that he was talking about Hermione.

"Judging by her reaction, I'd say not."

"She doesn't want me. That's why she ran away."

The Professor tried to ignore the bitterness in his voice as she replied, "I'm sure that's not true, Harry. It just came as a shock, that's all."

"But if she'd really wanted me, it wouldn't, would it? Come as a shock, I mean."

"I can't answer that, Harry. Perhaps you should ask her."

"I don't want to see her."

"Do you know where she is?"

Harry nodded. "On her bed. She's reading." He sounded angry about that as well.

"Okay, Harry. Why don't you wait here and I will go and see how she is."

Harry nodded again, and sat in one of the chairs.

Professor Sprout made her way to the Ravenclaw tower. The portrait, of course, let her in as a teacher. She asked one surprised girl to show her Hermione's dorm, then quietly knocked on the door. It was closed properly and swung open. Hermione was laying on the bed, as Harry had said, reading a thick leather-bound tome.

She looked up. "Professor? I'm sorry I ran out."

"It was a shock, obviously."

"I can't believe I didn't know. How could I have missed it?"

"Hermione," said Professor Sprout in a sterner tone of voice than she usually used. "Right now there is a little boy downstairs who thinks his bond mate doesn't want him."

"But that's not true! That's not true at all. I even dream about being with him..." She look embarrassed at what she'd just admitted and added, "you know, when we're older."

The Professor replied gently. "I believe I can imagine... but it's not me you need to be telling this to."

"I didn't mean to upset him. I just... panicked I guess. I'll tell him it's okay."

She tried desperately to send him a message mentally, but was met with a blank wall. "I can't reach him. He's shutting me out."

"He's in the charms classroom," pointed out the professor.



"I need to go and see him, don't I?"

"Do you want me to come with you?"

"No," Hermione replied as she got up from the bed. Then she changed her mind. "Yes. Please."

Hermione couldn't remember ever being as nervous in her life as she was as she walked downstairs to talk to the boy who'd come to mean so much to her, yet who she knew she'd just hurt badly without ever meaning to.

Harry was sitting with his back to the door.

"Harry?"

He didn't turn around.

"I'm sorry I ran off. I didn't mean..."

Now he turned around. He'd obviously been crying, but the expression on his face was anger, not hurt. "Yes, you did. You don't want me. You're just like everybody else. Mum and Dad only want me because I'm bonded to you. And you don't want me either."

Shocked as if she'd been slapped, Hermione could only cry "That's not true! Any of it."

"Yes it is. If you'd wanted me, you wouldn't have run off like that."

"I panicked."

The two children just stared at each other, Hermione, for once, at a loss for words, Harry, his anger exhausted but the hurt behind it remaining.

"Harry," said Professor Sprout. "I've only known Hermione for a very short time, but what's the first thing Hermione does any time she's faced with something she doesn't know or understand?"

Harry almost managed a grin. Almost. Then his expression hardened again. "Goes to find a book and tells us everything it says about it about five times."

"And Hermione, you were reading. Why did you feel you had to run out like that to consult a book?"

"I don't know," she replied desperately. "It was such a shock. I couldn't believe I'd missed it. I wanted to know if it was true."

"And is it?"

"I didn't have time to find out."

"A shock? If you really wanted me, it wouldn't be a shock. It wasn't to me."

"I... I..." began Hermione helplessly, then stopped, unable to think of anything to answer him.

"Hermione," said the professor. "You need to tell Harry how you feel about him. Start with what you told me."

Hermione looked at her doubtfully. The professor nodded.

"I dream about you," she admitted, her face beginning to go pink in places with embarrassment.

"So we share dreams sometimes. That doesn't mean anything," Harry retorted.

"I mean, I dream about us being together, when we're older, like Mum and Dad."

He looked at her suspiciously.

"I love the way you want to protect me." She couldn't resist adding, "even if you are annoying sometimes."

Ironically it was the bit she added that began to convince Harry that she meant what she was saying.

She went on. "I can't imagine being without you and I don't want to. Even just now, when I tried to send you a message from upstairs and you blocked me out..." she almost shivered at the memory... "I thought I'd lost you."

"Then why...?"

"And I've dreamed about the day you'd ask me to marry you, and when the hat said that..." Hermione seemed at a loss for words again. Harry could see the struggle in her face.

"Harry," the professor interrupted. "Almost every little girl dreams of some wonderful man sweeping her off her feet and asking her to marry him."

"But I'll never have that," Hermione said sadly. "We're already married, if the hat is right."

"If you have a soul bond, the hat is right," the professor confirmed.

"It's like I got what I already wanted and I was so excited, but felt like I was missing something."

"The chase, perhaps?"

Hermione and Harry looked at the professor, puzzled.

"There is nothing more exciting than knowing someone wants you and will... the old fashioned word is 'court' you. To try to make you want them and say yes to them."

Hermione understood some of what the professor was saying but could see that Harry didn't.

"Harry. For the last two years, off and on, I've dreamed that one day you'll ask me to marry you, and me saying yes, and how we'll live

after that. I want to be married to you. I just wanted it to be my choice." She grimaced. "Oh, that sounds awful."

Harry couldn't resist a smile at her frustration as she fell into silence again.

"So what happened when you put on the hat, Hermione?" the professor prodded her verbally.

"I felt like the hat had seen all my dreams, and when it said we were married, I thought everyone would think I was just a stupid little girl, dreaming like that... Even Harry would know I was being girly again." Her eyes widened with a sudden thought. "Oh my God! Did everyone hear what the hat said?"

"Yes," the professor replied. "You could have heard a pin drop. But Hermione. Nobody knows about your dreams but you and now me and Harry."

"It doesn't matter now, I've ruined everything," Hermione sobbed.

"I doubt it," the professor replied with a smile. "Harry, take the block away please and let Hermione show you how she feels about you."

To Hermione's surprise, Harry did so and she could feel a little growing hope in his mind. As she deliberately flooded him with her love for him and images from her dreams about him, she could feel that hope grow, until...

Harry's eyes opened wide, before he looked away and reddened. "You dream about us doing THAT?" he asked.

Hermione went even redder. "Well Mum and Dad do," she defended. "How do you think I got here?"

"Not till you're both a lot older, I hope," the professor said, trying to sound stern and failing.

Hermione quickly changed to showing him other dreams of them living together. For a minute Hermione just revelled in the warm

feelings coming back from Harry, until she suddenly said, "What are the others going to think?"

A cheery grin spread across the professor's face. "I wouldn't worry. Most won't understand. Some of the girls will be fascinated or jealous, and you'll probably get a lot of teasing about being Mrs. Potter."

"THAT must be what the Goblin said."

"Goblin?"

"The first time I went to Gringotts," she explained. "They showed me to a huge vault and said it was mine. He started to call me Mrs. Potter, but I interrupted him. Oh!" she looked guilty for a moment. "I've been spending your money, haven't I?"

The professor couldn't help being amused at the look on Hermione's face. "Actually, it's your money too," she reminded them. "You are husband and wife, as far as wizarding law is concerned."

Harry caught a sudden momentary feeling of sadness, and suddenly knew what it was. "Hermione. When we're old enough. I will ask you, okay?"

He was immediately enveloped in a hug and a squeal right in his ear nearly deafened him.

"Now. I suggest you two take the morning off and go and spend some time together, perhaps outside, while it's still warm enough."

"But what about lessons? And the sorting?" Hermione protested.

"Lessons are important. But some things are more important. You need this time together, both of you. Then you'll be ready for the sorting at lunchtime."

Hermione looked as if she was going to argue, but just nodded. "Shall we go outside, Harry?"

He didn't reply in words, rather he took her hand, opened the door to the classroom and ran outside, pulling her along behind him.

As they walked, Hermione could sense that Harry was a confused mixture of feelings. He thought of her like his sister and his best friend, but she was more than that, different to that.

"Harry, do you ever think about us, in the future, I mean?"

"Not really," he admitted.

"Maybe it's a silly girlie thing."

"You're not silly," then with a cheeky grin, he added, "Mrs. Potter."

Hermione laughed.

"I can't imagine ever not being with you though," Harry said. "Just no girlie kissing."

"No kissing. We can do you-know-what, when we're older, but no kissing."

They both collapsed in laughter.

Hermione suddenly turned serious. "Harry. Mum and Dad do love you, not just because of the bond."

"I know," Harry admitted. "I didn't mean to say that."

"You were just angry. They'd love you even if I wasn't here."

Harry was tempted for a moment to tease her that if she died, they wouldn't be able to love him as he'd die too, but it didn't seem the right moment to tease, so he just nodded.

"I don't think I ever thanked you," he said, seriously.

"What for?"

"Getting me out of the Dursleys. I used to just dream of going to sleep and not having to wake up."

He could feel a mixture of hurt on his behalf and anger at the Dursleys from Hermione, then slight amusement as she replied, "Well, you rescued me from the Slytherins, so we're even, okay?"

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When Harry and Hermione walked into the Great Hall for lunch, they could feel everyone's stares on them. After a momentary lull in noise level, there was a buzz as everyone was murmuring things to one another, and almost all on the same subject.

Suddenly Harry's hand went to his scar and Hermione could feel his pain. She looked up to see two of the professors, Snape and Quirrell, glaring at them with unmistakable hatred. Professor Snape didn't surprise her, but Professor Quirrell?

Banishing the thought from her mind, she sat with Harry on the stool, trying not to think of everyone watching them.

"Before you sort us." She thought at the hat, just as it fell on their heads again. "Why did you make us get sorted together like this and then tell everyone we're married? Professor Dumbledore wanted it kept secret to protect my parents."

"Dumbledore's heart is in the right place, but his mind slips," the hat replied enigmatically. "Your secret would not have lasted for long as your bond became stronger and you will need it to be strong to face the times ahead. And I sense that your bond being known will have its own role to play."

"Do you know the future?" Hermione asked.

"No," the hat admitted, "but the castle itself has strong magic, and it gives me a sense of what is to come. Dark times lie ahead, and you will face a choice between what is right and what is easy."

"That sounds like something Dumbledore would say," said Harry.

"Maybe it will be," the hat replied. "But enough of this, we have a job to do." The hat seemed to be thinking for a few moments. "Hmm, difficult," it said. "You both have a need to prove yourselves, especially Mrs. Potter, so that would suggest Slyth..."

"NOT SLYTHERIN," Harry and Hermione said together.

They could feel the hat's amusement as if it had been teasing them. "No, not Slytherin. You're both intelligent, too intelligent for your own good sometimes, especially Mrs. Potter."

"Not Ravenclaw," said Harry.

"Harry, they didn't accept me because I wasn't sorted there," Hermione argued. "That doesn't mean they'd be like that now."

"Well, I suppose if you really want Ravenclaw, I don't mind," Harry replied.

"Excuse me," said the hat. "This isn't a democracy. You may be intelligent, but it isn't what makes you who you are."

"That leaves Hufflepuff and Gryffindor," said Hermione.

"Don't worry about Hermione, she likes stating the obvious," Harry teased.

"As I said... Difficult. You are both brave, with lots of courage..."

"I don't feel very brave," Hermione put in.

"Bravery isn't about what you feel but what you do," the hat replied dismissively. "But you are also very loyal, to one another and to your friends. Difficult."

"Most of our friends are in Gryffindor," suggested Harry.



"That's true," replied the hat. "And given the storm that will come, that's probably the reason I'll put you in..."

The hat suddenly shouted out loudly, "Hufflepuff!"

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A note from Nacho, my beta: Brian assures me that Hermione is more romantic minded than... precocious, as a certain dialogue could imply. I think it's amusing either way.

Author's note...

THE VOTING:- Gryffindor 26, Hufflepuff 26, Another School 5, Slytherin 4, Ravenclaw 2, New house 2, No house 1.

My choice, as you know, was Hufflepuff. From a writer's point of view, I want to do something different, quite a lot of people didn't want Gryffindor because it been done so many times... been there, done that, got the T-shirt. I also agree with those who wanted to show that Hufflepuffs aren't worthless. From the point of view of the characters, I feel that although Harry especially may be very brave at time, his bravery comes when he is defending someone he cares about. He is extremely loyal to Hermione, despite the hiccup in this chapter. Hermione is also extremely loyal both to Harry and to her friends like her old teacher, Miss Collier. I also felt that Gryffindor, except Ron and the twins, would be very suspicious of an ex-Slytherin in their ranks, more so than Ravenclaw, who reacted that way only because she still hadn't been sorted there, only placed there by Dumbledore, but as we know from their treatment of Luna, they aren't accepting of anyone at all different. As for Slytherin, the idea of sending a powerful Harry & Hermione in there to cause a bloodbath was amusing...but not in this story. (Maybe someone would like to write a side story on that! ha ha)

Thanks to Alorkin for correcting Patsy's name in chapter 29 and to "person" for pointing out that I'd used Mom instead of Mum once in chapter 19, even though I am a Brit. Both chapters have been corrected and re-uploaded.

Thanks to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter thirty-one.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to She Who Must Not Be Named, her various publishers and a certain film company.

In the previous chapter...

With Professor Sprout's help, Hermione reconciles with Harry and they are sorted together into Hufflepuff.

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During the applause that followed, mainly from the Hufflepuff table, Hermione turned to give a grin to Professor Sprout, who looked very happy at the result. She also noticed that Professor McGonagall looked slightly disappointed.

They both walked to the Hufflepuff table where the others moved up to make space for them.

Fred and George came running over to shake their hands, quickly followed by Ron.

"Knew you weren't really a snake," said one of them, Hermione thought it was Fred, she'd noticed that he was usually the one to start these banter.

"No, not enough bite," George replied.

"Though she can give a good tongue-lashing," Fred added.

"Yeah, her bark's definitely worse than her bite. Not a snake at all, really."

Hermione stared hard at the twins for a moment, then open her mouth. "You wouldn't be suggesting that I'm a dog, would you?"

Whatever Fred and George would have replied was lost as Professor McGonagall arrived at the Hufflepuff table, with her "I'm about to tell you off expression."

"Professor? I thought it was okay to go to another table?" Fred asked. "You never minded when we joined Hermione on the Snake's table."

"So long as it's not the teachers' table, you may sit where you wish, Mr. Weasley," she replied evenly, "but you WILL remember that there is no running in the Great Hall, won't you?"

"Yes, Professor," they chorused back.

The first year Hufflepuffs first period after lunch was free, so Harry took Hermione to the Hufflepuff cellar, giving the password ("fidelity") to one of the still life paintings in the corridor near the kitchens. It opened to reveal a round tunnel, which led them down to the Hufflepuff common room.

Despite the fact that it was underground, like the Slytherin quarters, the two could not have been more different. The common room was filled with big, rather over-sized comfy-looking sofas, a few scattered sand-coloured beanbags and decorated with lively wall hangings, mostly with a yellow background. Contrary to the dark and gloomy atmosphere that the dark walls and the scattered torch-brackets awarded inside the Dungeon Common Room, the Cellar Common Room had a warm, cosy feeling awarded by a few chandeliers near the corners and a huge fire pit in the middle, which currently housed a cute little bonfire that seemed just a bit too bright for its size. In each side of the common room, there were further round doors, covering more round tunnels leading further down to the various dormitories.

Taking a seat in one of the armchairs, Hermione quickly calculated that with being in the Hospital, transferred to Ravenclaw, and the lesson they'd missed this morning, She'd missed all three Charms periods for the week, one double and one single and the second of the three Potions periods, while Harry had missed the third Charms lesson.

"I'll ask Professor Flitwick if he can help us catch up," she told Harry, "but I don't think I'll ask Professor Snape."

"No point," Harry agreed. "You can see my notes, what little there is of them."

Luckily, Susan Bones, one of the other Hufflepuff first year girls had made more extensive notes of their double Potions lesson, and it didn't take her long to read through them.

By the time she was finished, it was time for her first lesson as part of Hufflepuff, which happened to be Herbology, which Hufflepuff shared with Gryffindor.

Professor Sprout couldn't resist taking the opportunity to welcome Hermione to Hufflepuff, knowing that some of the Gryffindors had assumed that the couple would be sorted there. At the end of the lesson, Hermione asked Professor Sprout if she could ask Professor Flitwick about some Charms lessons for the ones she had missed.

After a break, they had Defense Against the Dark Arts, and Professor Quirrel was still stuttering on about vampires, much as he had been in the lesson Hermione had taken in her one day with Ravenclaw earlier in the week.

At the end of the lesson, which they shared with Ravenclaw, one of the Ravenclaw girls, who Hermione hadn't got to know in her short time with them, came up to Hermione. Harry was at her side instantly, but she only said, "I wanted to say sorry, you know, for how we were."

Hermione just said, "It's okay. You knew I'd been sorted Slytherin and not Ravenclaw."

Harry wasn't feeling as forgiving and was tempted to make a retort of his own, but knew that would only result in one of Hermione's put-downs with which she had ended many an argument at their old school.

Dinner was interrupted by gasps and screams from the Slytherin table as each of the students there began to burst out with sores. No sooner had the Slytherins gone running en-mass to the hospital wing than further screams disturbed the evening meal, this time from the Ravenclaw table, as their outer clothes disappeared. One of the Ravenclaw boys sat untroubled, in his underpants, still eating, but the remainder of his house also ran out of the Great Hall.

Professor Flitwick walked over to his one remaining student and suggested that he go and get dressed again and then return to finish his dinner. The professor then took out his wand and swept it a few times over the table, quickly stopping by one of the pitchers. He sniffed it, poured out its contents and then peeled out a piece of sticky tape from its inside. For some reason, he then glanced over to the Gryffindor, directly where Fred and George were sitting. His expression could only be described as satisfied.

He crossed to Harry and Hermione and said, "I'm sure you have no idea whatsoever who did those pranks."

"No, Professor," they dutifully replied, quickly followed by Harry adding, "Your guess is as good as ours, though." They knew nothing, but they could have had a good guess, or, to be more accurate, two good guesses.

"A pity," he sighed. "It was incredible charms work: a sticker enchanted to deliver a chain-triggered clothes-banishing charm into a drink. That's leagues above third year charm-work. If only they would put that much effort into their lessons."

As they made their way to the Hufflepuff Cellar, Hermione began to giggle.

"What's so funny?" Harry asked her.

"You know, if Ron had known the entrance to Hufflepuff is so close to the kitchens, he'd have been begging the hat to place him in Hufflepuff."

Harry and Hermione were still laughing when they reached the common room. Going briefly to her dormitory, she was pleased to see that everything had been moved there for her. She quickly found her old book on bonds and, as it was no longer exactly a secret, walked back up to the common room to look through it.

"It must be here somewhere," she said, frustrated, after the small section on Soul Bonds had said nothing about them being married. She scanned the chapter's contents yet again to make sure that she had missed nothing, but she hadn't. It wasn't there.

"It can't be a very good book," Harry said.

"But the woman in the shop said it was the best one, in fact that it was so detailed that nobody bothered to buy it any more, as they wanted one of the more modern ones that are easier to read."

Frustrated, she turned to the index again, then flicked over to the appendix entitled "Legal Implications."

Finally, she cried out, "I've found it," and began to read out loud.

"All types of marriage bond, including soul bonds (which, with the single exception of the temporary kind occasionally formed by combatants fighting together in a war, are considered legal proof of marriage) are considered to be absolute proof of maturity and thus any bond-person is treated under wizarding law as an adult, regardless of age.

"This used to be of more concern in past centuries when girls especially were expected to marry in their early teens, but it was never changed as the argument went that if they were mature enough to form a marriage bond, they were mature enough to be treated as adults, especially under the guidance of their, usually older, husbands." Hermione sniffed her disagreement at this point, then carried on reading.

"It remained controversial, however, but became unimportant as the tradition of early marriage for girls was slowly abandoned and marriages before the age of adulthood became increasingly rare."

"That's why I didn't find it!" she cried. "It wasn't even under Soul Bonds, it was simply a comment in a paragraph on the legal implications of Marriage Bonds."

"But what difference does it make?" asked Harry.

"Well, for a start, it means that nobody can force you to go back to the Dursleys even if they wanted to."

"He promised he wouldn't, anyway," Harry pointed out.

"We could learn to apparate if we wanted to."

Harry almost snorted. "Hermione, I can't even manage Wingardium Leviosa yet."

"It's Leviosa. I was just saying, that's all."

"I bet there's one thing that book doesn't say," said Harry, with a smirk.

"What's that?" asked Hermione, honestly puzzled, her faith in the book having been restored.

"How we're supposed to tell Mum and Dad we're married."

Some of the colour left Hermione's face at the thought. Then she closed and reopened the book and began reading the index again.

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The main subject of discussion in Hogwarts that evening seemed to be the Weasley twins. In the Ravenclaw common room, many of Professor Flitwick's students had asked to meet with him to complain about the embarrassing prank at dinner. Many had been too ashamed to return to finish their dinners.



When he arrived to the Library Common Room, he saw that his students had even had the thoughtfulness to assemble around the centre desk, which now sported a small staircase.

Once on it, he opened the meeting and asked whether it was about finding the culprit of the dinner incident.

"Everyone knows it was the Weasley twins," one shouted loudly.

"Almost certainly," agreed the professor affably.

"They seem to get away with anything and nobody ever does anything to stop them."

"I don't know. They spend rather a lot of their evenings in detention," the professor pointed out.

"They should be expelled," another student demanded angrily.

"That won't happen," replied the professor firmly.

"Gryffindors seem to do what they like. Even you won't do anything."

"No, I won't," he agreed. "And the reason nobody takes their pranks too seriously is that they tend to prank those who deserve it."

"And how did we deserve that?" one of the girls asked.

"Let me see, now. A first year girl, literally tortured while she was in Slytherin, was released from the hospital and placed here. Did any one of you offer her any friendship? Nobody? Not one?" He paused, as he made the effort to scan the faces of all the assembled students. "Then, someone stole one of her books, and her pyjamas. Is that how Ravenclaws behave when I am not watching over you?"

"But she was a Slytherin, the hat said so."

"And that is supposed to be an excuse for making her so unhappy that her bondmate, who, I might remind you, is the one who defeated You-Know-Who, and is therefore at great risk even to this day... You

made her so unhappy that he took the risk of publicly revealing the bonding, probably putting her life at risk, just to get her out of our clutches."

The ones who had been loudly complaining were shuffling their feet nervously.

"For your information, I have known Hermione Granger, sorry, Potter, for the last two years. You will never find a nicer girl, and probably not a cleverer one either. You are very lucky it was only the twins who pranked you. And I suspect the only reason Harry didn't deal with you himself was because Hermione asked him not to."

"He's only a first year," one commented, dismissingly.

"True, a first year who caved in the Slytherin entrance door to rescue his bond-mate, and did it without having a single offensive spell to his name. And you can also be very glad that I don't know who stole her things, or who made her so unhappy here, or it would be you getting expelled, not the Weasley twins. And if you don't want to be on the wrong end of more Weasley lessons, I suggest that the cleverest thing would be to try to make it up to Hermione Potter as quickly as you can and for her items to appear right on this desk by tomorrow morning. "

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The Weasley twins came up in conversation in Hufflepuff too. "Hermione, I'm Susan Bones, and this Saturday evening, we're holding a party in the first year girls' dorm." She turned to Harry, "Don't worry, Harry, boys are invited."

"But boys can't get into the girls' dorms," Hermione objected.

"Why?" Harry asked, then pointed out, "I got into your dorm at Slytherin."

"That's because the Slytherin girls' dorms aren't warded against boys getting in. According to them, women are just for men to use, so as

long as nobody gets pregnant while they are still at school, they turn a blind eye."

"So, how are we getting into your dorm on Saturday?" Harry asked.

"Professor Sprout agreed to remove the ward, just for a few hours," Susan explained. "It was easy when we told her why."

"For a party?" Hermione asked doubtfully.

"For a welcome home party for you, actually," she replied, smiling.

Hermione didn't know what to say and Harry could see her eyes filling with tears.

"The boys wanted it to be a surprise party, but we decided you'd prefer to know, so you could dress up if you wanted to."

Hermione nodded, not trusting herself to speak. Finally she flew towards a very surprised Susan Bones and hugged her, before rushing up to her room.

"I just wish we could get some butterbeer," Susan said.

"That's easy," Harry replied. "Ask Fred or George Weasley."

"From what I've heard, they probably could get it. But why would they get it for us? They're Gryffindors."

"If you tell them it's for a party for Hermione, I don't think you'll have any problems."

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Another, more serious, conversation was going on in Professor Dumbledore's office.

"You wanted to see me, Minerva?"

"Yes, Albus. You seem... preoccupied."

Professor Dumbledore knew it was useless to deny it. "I confess that I am a little worried."

"About the sorting?"

"No. And not even about Molly Weasley's howler. It's actually one of the younger Weasleys..."

"One?"

"Well, something one of them said."

"The other morning," Minerva replied. It wasn't a question. "And I suspect he was right. I would not like to be in the way if somebody does anything to Hermione. So what's on your mind?"

"The world sees Harry Potter as I do, as a saviour. What if his upbringing with the Dursleys has changed him?"

"I'm sure it has," Minerva said, being deliberately unhelpful. "Luckily for us, Hermione and the Grangers came along. Otherwise, I suspect you may have had a hand in creating the next dark lord."

Albus took the rebuke in silence.

"And you are wrong about one thing. The world doesn't see Harry Potter as you do. They see him as someone who saved them, past tense. Unless I am very wrong, you see him as that in the future tense, am I correct?"

"You know I cannot tell you, Minerva."

"An answer that doesn't deny my statement, Albus" she commented, to his chagrin. "Well I suggest you tell him, before it's too late."

"He is too young. He deserves a childhood."

"One that he didn't have. If he discovers the truth by himself, you will lose him forever, you know that?"

The older man looked up, slightly startled. "He can't."

"The rest of the school may believe it was Molly Weasley's howler that made you remove Hermione from Slytherin, but you haven't fooled Fred and George Weasley. I actually found them in the library, would you believe?"

Albus raised an eyebrow. "The library?"

"Yes. Checking out every book they could find on Harry Potter and You-Know-Who."

"They will find nothing."

"Maybe not. But between them and Hermione Gra... Potter, they may learn enough to come to some conclusions of their own. I repeat, Albus. You made a mistake with Harry once. Don't leave it too long this time, or we all may regret it."

Professor Dumbledore gave a heavy sigh. "If what you tell me is true, I think I am very glad that Harry and Hermione aren't in the same house as the Weasley twins."

"That may not buy you as much time as you want. Albus. Like it or not, legally, he is an adult, despite his age. You owe it to him and to Hermione to treat him like one."

"He is so young."

"Yes," she replied coldly. "Young enough to be attacked and killed by some remaining death eater before You-Know-Who even returns. If the risk is as high as you believe, don't you think at least he and Hermione deserve to know why, even if you won't tell the rest of us?"

Professor Dumbledore didn't answer and appeared deep in thought. Professor McGonagall slipped quietly out of his office.

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Author's note...

Thanks to my beta, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez.

I finally got this chapter written and my connection died so I couldn't send it to my beta, creating a further delay, and finally my computer died on me, so I couldn't do a thing for over a week.

Nachoman says: And I'm just glad for all the delays. I have been so ridiculously busy this past week that I might have created the delays myself.

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter thirty-two.

Disclaimer:-

To anyone who has been on another planet since 1997, this is to let you know that Harry Potter belongs to She Who Must Not Be Named, her various publishers and a certain film company.

In the previous chapter...

The Slytherins and Ravenclaws got pranked. Hermione discovers they are legally adults.

Hufflepuffs plan a party. Dumbledore worried about Harry turning dark...

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"Potions today," Harry said to Hermione as they ate breakfast, as if she didn't already know. "Are you planning on staying for the whole lesson this time?"

"Very funny."

"I wish I'd been there the other day. Seeing Hermione Granger walk out of a lesson. What would Miss Collier or Remus say?"

"It's Hermione Potter, Potter," she retorted.

"I forgot."

"Good job ONE of us has a memory then, isn't it?" She got up from the table and said, "Now I'm going to study the potions lesson I missed until the lesson, so don't disturb me."

"Do you need my notes?" Harry offered.

"I've borrowed Susan's. I can read them."

Once, the slight on Harry's poor writing would have hurt him, but Hermione had spent so long with him, helping him to read and write, that her joke about his handwriting had become an old one. She had often told him that if he took his time, his handwriting would be much better, but Harry was always too impatient and wanting to do something else.

Professor Snape began their potions lesson with a sneering comment. "So nice of you to join us, Miss Granger. Are you thinking of staying for the whole lesson this time?"

"That's Mrs. Potter, Professor," Harry answered for her.

The professor turned to Harry, ready to make a retort, but caught the look of anger in Harry's eyes and, remembering the Slytherin door, decided against it.

Hermione noticed the amazed faces of the other students, especially the Ravenclaws, at the professor's reaction to Harry.

Turning away swiftly, Professor Snape said loudly, "Cauldrons out! Wands away! Now we'll try again to make the potion you all managed to ruin in the last lesson. There is no need for talking. The instructions are on the blackboard."

At the end of the lesson, he went round the room, peering into each cauldron and sniffing lightly. He came to Hermione's cauldron last. "Hardly perfect, is it? It's obvious why you were rejected from Ravenclaw. As not one of you managed a perfectly simply potion, all of you dunderheads can write me fifteen inches on this potion, its ingredients, and where you went wrong, before the next lesson. Then you will try again. Empty and rinse your cauldrons as you leave. Go!" He turned and walked into his office, slamming the door behind him.

As a tearful Hermione rinsed out her cauldron, one of the Ravenclaws said, "He was well out of order."

"Maybe he was right," Hermione replied.



"Your potion was better than most of ours," the Ravenclaw girl replied.  
"And your ending up in Hufflepuff was our loss."

"And our gain," said Hannah Abbot, one of the Hufflepuff girls.

"If you want to complain about him, we'll back you up," said another of the Ravenclaws.

"Not that there's any point," said another. "People complain about him all the time and Dumbledore won't do anything."

"Come on, Hermione" Harry said. "I know someone who will. We've got time to see them before History of Magic, if they're not in a lesson."

"Who?"

"Gred and Forge, of course." He took off at a run.

"But you don't even know how to get to the Gryffindor common room."

"There aren't that many towers. It can't be that hard to find."

But Harry was wrong. An unconvinced Hermione allowed herself to follow Harry, he was only defending her, after all, and soon wished she hadn't.

"Harry."

"What?"

"I don't think this is the way."

"No," he agreed. "Maybe it's spelled so nobody else can find it."

"With those staircases I don't think that's necessary."

"Where are we?"

"I think this is the third floor corridor, the one we're not supposed to be in," she replied. She almost jumped, then said, "What's that noise?"

"Filch's cat!" He ran down the corridor to the door at the end. "Damn! It's locked. We're done for."

"Oh, come here," Hermione pushed him aside and pointed her wand at the door. "Alohamora!"

The door opened. They ran inside and slammed it shut behind them.

Harry checked that the door was properly shut and put his head to the edge of the door to listen for Filch. "I'll have to remember that one. I wonder why it was locked?"

"Shh!, you'll wake it," Hermione hissed.

"What?" Harry turned. Facing them was a huge dog with three heads. One eye slowly opened. A moment later both eyes on all three heads were glaring at them. All three heads bared their teeth.

Harry pulled the door open again and they ran out as the dogs heads barked and tried to bite them. With some effort, then forced the door shut again.

"What the hell are they doing, keeping a thing like that in a school?"

"Didn't you see?" Hermione replied. "It was standing on a trapdoor. It's guarding something."

"I didn't notice its feet. I was more worried about the heads."

"What would it be guarding?" Hermione pondered.

"I don't know. We'd better get back."

"I hope you know the way down, or we'll be late for History of Magic."

"Like he'd notice," Harry retorted.

"That's not the point, Harry, and you know it."

Only Hermione wasn't bored in History of Magic and she was filling page after page in her notebook with notes.

As she was packing up her notebooks, Harry said, "Come on. We still have to see the twins, and I want to see if they know about that three-headed dog."

"They might be in a lesson. I need to write these notes neatly. Why don't we just ask them at lunch? Unless you want to risk getting lost on your own?"

Harry decided against that, but was impatient until they could see the twins at lunchtime.

When Harry and Hermione went to join the twins at their table, glares from some of the Gryffindors, especially at Hermione, made the twins decide to get up and sit with Harry and Hermione at the Hufflepuff table. The Hufflepuffs moved up willingly, hoping to hear about more pranks on the other houses.

But for once the twins were serious. "A three-headed dog, you say?" asked Fred.

They looked at each other and said together, "Hagrid!"

"What about him?" Hermione asked.

"Oh," replied George, "You haven't been here long enough to know yet, but Hagrid's obsessed with strange animals, the more dangerous the better. He's bound to know about it."

"Will he say? If it's guarding something?" Hermione asked.

"What makes you think it was guarding something?" asked George.

"It was standing on a trapdoor."

"Hmm. Fred? Didn't one of the firsties say they met Hagrid in Gringotts, and he said he was getting something for Dumbledore, to keep safe?"

"Yeah," Fred replied. "Wouldn't say what it was though."

"Could be coincidence," said George.

"Could be," Fred agreed.

Then they both said together, "Nah." and shook their heads.

"We're free this afternoon," said Harry. "Why don't we go and see him?"

"Can't," George replied.

"We've got Herbology," Fred explained.

"You two could go though," George suggested. "He'll be less suspicious with you two anyway."

"He always seems to think we're up to something," Fred said in a hurt tone of voice.

"Because you usually are?" asked Harry.

"Us?" the twins asked together, then added, "We're sweet and innocent as firsties."

Hermione giggled and Harry retorted, "You weren't sweet and innocent even before you were firsties."

"As we've been insulted," said Fred, "I think it's time for us to go."

The twins got up and with a pretend sniff into an invisible handkerchief, they left Hermione and Harry alone.

"Hagrid," Hermione began, after being attacked and licked on the face by Hagrid's dog, Fang. "We wanted to ask you something."

"Anything you like," replied Hagrid.

Then Hermione surprised Harry by asking, "You know about Harry at the Dursleys. It was supposed to be secret. How did you know?"

Hagrid looked upset and for a moment they thought that he was going to cry. "It was me that took you there, Harry. After your Mum and Dad, Merlin bless 'em, well, after they was killed by You-Know-Who, Dumbledore asked me to take you to your relatives. He said you'd be safe from death-eaters there."

"He was just nearly killed by his relatives," retorted Hermione angrily. Harry thought that she'd never quite forgive anyone for abandoning him there.

"I know, Now. We din' know then. If I'da known, I'd never 'ave took yer."

"I know, Hagrid. It wasn't your fault."

"Dumbledore trusted me to take you. I was so proud... If I'da known..."

"It's all right, Hagrid, we know," said Hermione.

Hagrid sniffed loudly.

"Does Dumbledore often trust you with things?"

"Oh yes. Knows I'd never let 'im down, 'e does."

"Like getting something secret from Gringotts. Whatever that three-headed dog is guarding?"

"How'd you know 'bout Fluffy?"

"Fluffy?" cried Harry. "Who could call a brute like that Fluffy?"

"I did," replied Hagrid defensively. "He's not so bad when you get to know 'im."

"So what's he guarding?" asked Hermione.

"That's secret that is. Can't tell you."

And true to his word, they couldn't get another word about the subject out of him.

The twins were highly amused when Harry told them of their conversation with Hagrid.

"Definite Slytherin tendencies there, George."

"Definite, Fred."

"Clever though, make him feel guilty about Harry first, then ask him about the dog."

Hermione looked embarrassed.

"Shall we ask Dumbledore for another sorting, Fred?"

Hermione looked worried for a moment until she realised that they were joking with her. Even Harry, who hadn't noticed Hermione's tactics with Hagrid, had realised that the twins were just playing with Hermione.

"So what do we do now? Any ideas?" he asked.

But nobody had.

The following day, Saturday, was something unusual, a lesson on a weekend. Their first flying lesson. The Gryffindors had their lesson in the morning with Slytherin, while Hufflepuff shared the afternoon lesson with Ravenclaw.

The talk at lunchtime was how a Gryffindor first year, Neville Longbottom, had fallen off his broom and broken his wrist and been

taken, crying, to Madam Pomfrey. While he was gone, Malfoy had taken the remembrall, a thing his grandmother had sent him that morning, and thrown it on the roof somewhere.

Hermione noticed that he wasn't at lunch and decided it would make a nice excuse to see Madam Pomfrey if they went to check on him in the hospital wing.

To their surprise, they found him crying.

"Surely it's not still hurting?" Hermione asked him.

"No," he sniffed, wiping his eyes, obviously embarrassed at being caught crying again.

"What's the matter, then?"

"Nothing."

Neville seemed nervous of Hermione, so Harry went and sat on his bed. "What's wrong? You can tell us."

Neville hesitated, then, to their surprise, admitted, "My grandmother always said I'd make a useless wizard and she's right. Some of the other Gryffindors don't even want me sitting with them, cause they say I'm not brave enough to be in Gryffindor."

"That's rubbish," said Harry, who could bitterly remember the years growing up being told he was useless. "You just lack confidence, that's all."

"How would you know? You don't even know me."

"Because Harry was like you are, only worse," said Hermione.

"Thanks, Hermione," Harry replied.

"Well, it was true."

"Yeah, I suppose so," Harry admitted.

"You? But you're..."

"The Boy Who Lived," Harry finished for him, rather bitterly. "I know."

"Look, we've got flying this afternoon..." Hermione began.

"... something Hermione's actually not sure she'll be good at," Harry interrupted. "You can't learn it from a book," he said in a conspiratorial tone of voice.

Neville smiled. "You can't do worse than me."

"I was going to say," said Hermione, looking offended, "that afterwards, if you like, we could teach you some spells, so you can be ahead of everyone in class."

"And so if anyone bullies you, you can deal with them," said Harry.

"Harry," said Hermione, "we don't want to get him in trouble."

"And we don't want him bullied either," replied Harry firmly.

Hermione thought for a second. "Okay. I'll look up some defensive spells. And Neville, if they don't want you sitting with them, you can always sit with us, if you like."

Neville looked happier, so they left.

"If Malfoy's involved, he'll need more than defensive spells," Harry commented to Hermione, as they were walking away from the hospital wing.

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Author's note...

Please review.



Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter thirty-three.

Disclaimer:-

See below the chapter.

In the previous chapter...

Harry and Hermione discovered a three-headed dog and made friends with Neville Longbottom...

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Flying, Hermione decided, was one thing she definitely preferred doing the Muggle way, in a nice, safe aeroplane, preferably strapped into an aisle seat and watching an in-flight movie as a distraction. In fact the last in flight movie she'd seen had even allowed her to tease Harry. It was a movie called Troll, in which a dark haired boy called Harry Potter discovered magic and had to fight a Troll.

Right now, Hermione thought, she'd rather fight a troll than trust her life to this rather decrepit piece of wood. Her broom seemed to be ignoring her command to rise, making her wonder if it could somehow know that she didn't actually really want it to.

Harry's broom, however, had flown instantly and effortlessly into his hand. Hermione noticed that everyone else had their broom in their hands already and most of them were looking impatiently at her. "Up!" she almost shouted in desperation, and to her surprise it flew up into her hand.

While Harry, much to his own surprise, had already soared into the sky, until he was called back down by Madam Hooch, and most of the rest of the class were beginning to do circuits around the courtyard, Hermione was barely leaving the ground, pushing herself up, then, as the broom began to gather a little speed, panicking and forcing it back down again.

Hermione looked at the others and among the sympathetic looks were some grins at her predicament. She supposed she must look funny, the girl who did everything best, barely able to find the nerve to get off the ground.

She was startled by a noise behind her and turned around quickly. "Oh, Harry, it's you."

"Come on," he said. "Follow me."

"No, I... I can't."

"Yes, you can," he insisted. "Stay beside me. I won't let anything happen to you."

She was about to argue but she could feel waves of reassurance coming at her from Harry. She just couldn't disappoint him in this. She had to try.

"Just push off, and point the broom upwards."

Forcing herself to push harder, she rather overdid it and quickly found herself shooting higher, far faster than she'd intended. Hermione screamed loudly, then realised that Harry was right beside her. "It's okay," he shouted, at least that's what it looked like as the wind took the sound away.

As she looked into his eyes she felt her panic subsiding until she almost began to enjoy herself. He was trying to say something to her and his eyes looked worried. Suddenly he barged into her so that she almost fell and put his arm around her waist. They shot straight upwards together and she noticed the branches of a tree sweep below them.

He slowed down and steered them gently to the ground. "What did you do that for?" she shouted at him.

"It's a good idea to look where you are going," he replied calmly. "You nearly hit that tree."

“Oh,” she said, deflated.

“Come on, try again.”

“Oh, no that's enough.”

“Come on. And watch where you're going this time.” Harry took off expecting her to follow him.

It was easier the second time and they left the courtyard far below. As they flew over the lake, the almost-setting sun was dipping low over the mountains causing the clouds to light up in a range of spectacular colours. Without thinking, she stopped to look.

Harry turned around. “What's wrong?”

“It's beautiful.” He saw she had tears in her eyes. He turned his head to look at the sky. It was okay, he supposed, and decided that he'd never understand girls.

“We'd better get back,” he said.

After a minute or so, Harry suddenly dived down towards the roof nearest to the courtyard. Hermione shrieked, fearing he was going to crash, but he landed lightly on the roof and picked something up, then flew down to the courtyard, where Hermione jumped off her broom and ran at him angrily. “If you EVER do that again...”

“What?”

“I thought I was going to lose...” She blinked angry tears from her eyes... “I thought you were going to crash.”

“I just spotted this.” He held up Neville's Remembrall.

Hermione didn't get a chance to reply as Madam Hooch said, “Mr. and Mrs. Potter, while I'm sure it was a romantic flight, I did say you should not leave the courtyard.”

“Sorry, Madam Hooch,” both said together. Hermione glared angrily at Harry for getting her into trouble.

“That was an amazing piece of flying, young man. I shall be sure to tell your head of house.”

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At dinner that night Harry crossed over to the Gryffindor table and handed Neville his Remembrall. He was sitting alone again. Hermione noticed some of the Gryffindors scowling at Neville, so she got up and walked over to them.

“Why have you got it in for Neville?” she asked.

“What's it to do with you?” One replied. “Are you going to panic and scream as us like you did this afternoon?”

One of the older Gryffindors called out, “Yeah, Harry. Did you know you've got yourself a screamer?”

Hermione smiled sweetly for a moment then answered, “Neville's our friend. And before you treat him badly, you might want to remember what Harry did to the Slytherin door.” She turned to Neville and said, “Come on, Neville. Come and sit with us until they learn some manners.”

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Hermione had borrowed Hedwig a few days before and the owl had returned earlier that day with a package, so Hermione disappeared quickly after dinner.

“Where's Hermione?” Harry asked a little while later.

“Went up with the other girls to get ready for the party,” Ernie Macmillan replied.

“Already? The party's not for another two hours!”

Ernie just shrugged his shoulders. “That's girls for you.”

Harry repeated aloud his thought from the afternoon. “I'll never understand girls.”

“Why would you want to?” Ernie thought for a moment and then admitted, “I suppose you have to as you're married to one.”

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When the boys were finally allowed into the girls' dorm, even Harry had to admit that Hermione looked good. She was wearing her best dress, and one of the older girls had obviously helped her with make-up. She even had her bushy hair under control, for once.

Even Harry knew enough to make sure that he told her, “You look good.” and was rewarded with a hug, thankfully not as tight a hug as her usual hugs as she didn't want to crease her dress.

Someone banged on the table and Susan Bones said loudly. “This is a welcome home party for Hermione. The Ravensclaws were too stupid to accept her, she wasn't evil enough for Slytherin, so we're her family now.”

“And the Gryffindors weren't brave enough to take her,” said Harry, causing a laugh, even from Hermione.

But Susan hadn't finished. “Some houses don't think much of us in Hufflepuff, but we have a tradition. You stay loyal to us, and we will be loyal to you throughout your time here and beyond. Some of the older Hufflepuffs have commented on how Hermione has already begun to help those who need it, to be a friend, regardless of house. Has everyone got a Butterbeer? Let's drink to friendship, to loyalty and to our newest Puff, Hermione Potter.”

Harry wasn't surprised to see tears in Hermione's eyes and he knew exactly why. During ll her time in Muggle primary school, she had

desperately wanted to be accepted, but had never really figured out how to make that happen. In the Weasley Junior School, she had finally found acceptance, but largely because she had been the driving force behind it. Here she'd just been accepted simply for being Hermione. As he looked across the room, he caught her eye and she knew immediately that he had understood.

The party went on until Professor Sprout came to break it up around half past nine and send the boys back to their own dorm. She turned to leave and then paused and said quietly, "Oh, Harry, Hermione. Can you come and see me sometime tomorrow? You're not in trouble," she added, seeing the look on their faces, "but I have something to discuss with you."

They were both curious, but knew that she would say nothing further until the following day.

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Sunday dawned with a weak sun barely shining through the early morning mist, which made the castle seem almost like a spooky island.

Almost at the end of breakfast the post arrived. The professors began reading their Sunday newspapers, then Professor Sprout got up and walked over to Harry and Hermione. She looked worried. "Can you come with me please?"

"Have we done something wrong?" Hermione asked, as they followed Professor Sprout into an empty classroom.

"No, dear. There's no easy way to say this, but I thought you'd better read this before someone else tells you about it." She handed them her copy of a newspaper.

SUNDAY PROPHET

BOY WHO LIVED – MARRIED AT 11

by Rita Skeeter

In a dramatic turn of events this week at Hogwarts, it was learned that Harry Potter, more commonly known as The Boy Who Lived, is married. Of course, to marry at the age of just eleven years old would normally be illegal, but sources close to the couple tell us that his young bride is devious and clever, enough so to find a loophole in the law.

So who is the girl who somehow snared probably the most sought after young man in Hogwarts? She is Hermione Granger, a Muggle-born, who has previously been studying at the secretive school for Muggle-borns set up by Molly Wisley, wife of a minor ministry employee.

Everyone is asking how Miss Granger, or as we must now call her, Mrs. Potter, managed to snare Mr. Potter. "It certainly wasn't by her looks," said one prominent student. Indeed, the new Mrs. Potter is a rather plain girl with somewhat uncontrollable hair and rather unattractive buckteeth.

Surprisingly for the wife of The Boy Who Lived, she had been sorted into Slytherin and other students who knew her from there confirm that she is clever and manipulative. Apparently manipulative enough to force her new husband into demanding an unprecedented new sorting. That he wasn't brave enough to stand up to her unreasonable demand is shown by the fact that, contrary to widespread expectations, Harry Potter was not sorted into Gryffindor, but Hufflepuff.

When we later learned that one of the two main teachers at the then Miss Granger's school for Muggle-borns is a werewolf, no less, it should come as no surprise that she should know enough dark magic to entice the young and innocent Harry Potter.

Given the violent actions of the young Mr. Potter in destroying the Slytherin Common Room to bring about the resorting, it would seem that she has already passed on her dark knowledge to the impressionable young man.



It has now been revealed that Miss Granger's parents took Harry Potter from his rightful family over three years ago and he has not been allowed to see them since.

We at the Prophet trust that the Ministry will mount a full investigation into the Granger family's actions and see about freeing The Boy Who Lived from their grasp.

Another investigation, we are sure, will be studying how a secretive school was set up and why it was allowed to have a dark creature as a teacher.

It should be noted that Mrs. Hermione Potter neé Granger is rather older than her new husband. Harry Potter is, of course, heir to the Potter fortune, which, it is believed, consists of not only a vast amount of gold, but a considerable number of valuable properties. This raises questions about whether the young lady, and I use the term loosely, is nothing more than a gold digger.

Knowing the uproar which would rightfully occur when her secret marriage became a matter of public knowledge, we can only speculate on whether she has already taken the purity of the young heir and saviour of the wizarding world, thus making it impossible to annul the marriage.

As a Muggle-born, it is possible that any children of the marriage may not be magical, in which case the fortune of one of the oldest and proudest wizarding families may be lost to the wizarding world forever. The Ministry must take it upon itself to introduce laws to protect wizarding families from this kind of threat from those outside our community.

Harry was still reading when he noticed Hermione, staring at Professor Sprout in disbelief, her face masked with hurt and anger and her eyes full of unshed tears.

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Note: "Wisley" is Rita's typo, not mine!

To Grammar police – if you are going to offer corrections in a review, please do it politely. If that is beyond you, at least have the courage to sign it so I can reply to you. If you'd taken time to read my notes you'd have known that it was posted as soon as I could access it due to serious computer problems and an internet connection which lasted literally a few minutes before dying for days each time. (Now apparently fixed at last after more than two months!)

Disclaimer:-

“Once again folks, Brian would make this bit far too boring, so we've taken over, haven't we, Fred?”

“Yes, George. We need to tell everyone that Harry Potter, the dark-haired boy who discovers magic and battles a Troll doesn't belong to Brian”

“I never knew that, Fred. Who does he belong to?”

“He belongs to John Carl Buechler, who was writer and director of the 1986 movie.”

“Yeah, but I bet you didn't know this. Two of the actresses in the movie were surnamed Lockhart, which rings a bell somewhere...”

They were suddenly interrupted. “That's nothing. Harry's lightning-bolt is borrowed from a girl, well, a TV series about a girl, Sabrina, the teenage witch.”

“Ginny, what are you doing here? You're too...”

“If you're going to tell everyone I'm too young to get involved in the legal bit...” Ginny reached for her wand.

“No, okay, Gin. You can do the next bit.”

“Right then. Some things of Harry's character like unruly hair, going to a magical school where he made enemies with the rich, arrogant, blonde kid on the first day, having a penchant for breaking the rules

and getting away with it, falling into situations in which he save the lives of his fellow students and teachers, being more powerful than he gives himself credit for, being brave and persevering and having a special relationship with his pet, Brian borrowed from Jill Murphy's The Worst Witch, first published in 1974. See I told you it was pinched from a girl."

"Okay, clever, what else did he pinch from her?"

"Er... Harry's booksmart best friend and his best friend from a less prestigious wizarding family..."

"Does that mean us, Fred?"

"Booksmart?"

Ginny laughed at the thought of the twins being booksmart.

"No, the less prestigious wizarding family."

"Probably, George. Go on, Ginny."

"As I was saying, his best friends are also borrowed from Jill Murphy, along with the rich arrogant blond enemy whose father is one the school governors and who does well in potions but was once turned into an animal."

"Turned into an animal? That's a good idea. You know what, Fred?"

"Yeah. Prank time."

"Shut up you two, I'm trying to finish this. He also borrowed the most feared teacher who teaches Potions class, who is tall, thin, and imposing, dresses head to toe in black and has a notable disapproving glare from Jill Murphy. He even borrowed some of her other characters, as well as the castle, the forest and he took the scene with broomstick lessons in the courtyard while dressed in black capes from the 1986 film version of her book."

"Ah but he didn't borrow us from anyone. We're originals."

"He borrowed us from She-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named."

"You mean we belong to her, Fred?"

"Yes," said Ginny, firmly.

"Yuk," the two twins said together.

"I think I need a shower," said Fred.

"At least she's not bad looking, for an oldie."

"Have you two finished?" Ginny sounded exasperated.

"Yes."

"Right. Unlike someone else who borrowed all of these, Brian's not making billions, so please don't sue him. Try suing She-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named-As-She'll-Probably-Sue instead."

Author's note...

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and Edmond.

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter thirty-four.

Disclaimer:-

Still not mine, sniff, sniff.

In the previous chapter...

Harry and Hermione had their first flying lesson, Hermione's welcome home party, and learned the hard way about Rita Skeeter...

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“Why?” Hermione gasped. “What did I do?”

Professor Sprout pulled Hermione into a hug and said quietly, “Nothing. Some people are just full of hate and prejudice.”

Hermione pushed herself away from Professor Sprout as another thought struck her. “Harry. Mum and Dad get the prophet, and we still haven't told them we are married.”

Harry opened his mouth to speak but was too shocked to think of a reply.

“Don't worry, Hermione. I'll check with Professor Dumbledore and then we'll contact your parents.”

She left Harry and Hermione alone. Harry was still finishing the article and Hermione noticed his face growing harder and harder.

“She makes it sound like Mum and Dad kidnapped me so you could marry me for my money.”

“Not to mention it makes you and Remus look evil,” Hermione pointed out.

Harry snorted. “Violent am I? Where is their office? I'll go there and show her 'violent'!”

“Harry, don't be silly,” Hermione replied in a somewhat bossy tone of voice. “You can't, and if you could it would only make things worse.”

“Worse?” he cried. “How could it be worse?”

They were soon to find out.

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They had just sat down to lunch when Professor Sprout walked up to them. “Harry, Hermione, after lunch, if you come to my office, we can go and see your parents. I understand their house is on the Floo Network?”

“Yes, Professor,” replied Hermione.

“Very well. Take your time eating. There's no hurry.”

As she walked to the teachers' table, a solitary owl flew into the great hall. It dived down to Hermione and dropped a red envelope.

“It's a Howler,” gasped Susan, backing away.

Just as Hermione reached for the envelope, it opened by itself and a woman's voice began to scream. “YOU FOUL, EVIL, MUDBLOOD SLUT! HOW DARE YOU STEAL HARRY POTTER FROM HIS FAMILY? STAY AWAY FROM DECENT WIZARDING FOLK AND GO BACK WITH THAT WEREWOLF 'FRIEND' OF YOURS.”

Some of the students at the Slytherin table laughed, but the rest of the school was in shock.

Suddenly the howler exploded, sending a shower of something foul in all directions. Some of it landed on Harry's arm, a little on Neville's cheek, a considerable amount even went as far as across the table where it splattered both Susan's arms, but most of it caught Hermione full in the face and her hands were covered too. Everywhere it touched, the skin blistered painfully and began oozing

from white pustules. A faint odour of petrol also permeated the air around them.

Hermione cried in agony as she tried to wipe the ooze out of her eyes, yet she only made the situation worse, getting even more of the secretion in her eyes.

Harry looked up and saw about twenty more owls headed for Hermione. "Let's get out of here," he said urgently, pulling at her arm.

"I can't see," she cried, her eyes swollen shut from the oozing sores.

"We'll help you," said Neville, then added nervously, "if you'd like. I've er, got to go to the hospital wing myself."

Students were running to get away as the owls began to descend on Hermione and more red envelopes began to fall towards her.

Professor Dumbledore was by their side far quicker than Harry would have thought possible and waved his hand towards the other Howlers, which immediately disappeared in a flash of bright flame. He then turned his hand to all the owls still streaming into the Great Hall. Once the headmaster banished their deliveries, they all turned away and flew back outside.

"If you don't mind, Harry, I will take Mrs. Potter to the hospital wing. You three had better come along as well. Is anyone else hurt?" he asked, noticing there were others that got hit with the pus.

Nobody else was, so he waved a hand and Hermione was suddenly stiff as a board. "It's Petrificus Totalus Harry..." answering Harry's unspoken question. As Hermione fell, the Headmaster waved his outstretched hand again "Wingardium Leviosa, Harry. It's easy, once you get the hang of it." Seeing Harry's startled look, he explained, "This way she won't feel anything until I get her to Madam Pomfrey."

As soon as they reached the hospital wing, a shocked Madam Pomfrey had the headmaster place Hermione on a bed, then handed white gowns to the other three and ordered them to get changed and

get into beds. As she drew curtains around Hermione, Harry insisted on staying with her.

When Madam Pomfrey released her from the Petrificus spell, Hermione screamed as the pain returned. Harry went to take her hand, only to find himself abruptly pushed aside. "Don't touch the areas with sores, it will be agony for her."

He nodded and placed a hand on her shoulder. "I'm here. You'll be alright soon."

"It hurts so much," Hermione mumbled through her swollen lips.

"It won't for longer, Mrs. Potter, Hermione," Madam Pomfrey assured her. "I want you to try to open your eyes so I can wash them out first. That's it. Good girl." A gentle stream of cool water came from the end of Madam Pomfrey's wand. When she had finished with Hermione's eyes, she rinsed off the rest of her face, then moved to her hands. "Does it hurt anywhere else?"

Hermione pointed to her chest.

"I see. It looks like the pus soaked through your clothes. I will have to undress you. Harry, perhaps you could wait outside. Go and change into the gown I gave you while you are waiting."

Harry slipped away quietly through the curtains.

As Madam Pomfrey helped undress Hermione, she said, "I hope you don't mind me asking him to go outside. I know he is your husband, but I didn't think you'd want him to see you like this."

"We don't, I mean, we haven't..."

"It would be none of my business if you did, Hermione, although I would suggest waiting a few years." She quickly rinsed off the few places where the pus had seeped through Hermione's clothes, then helped her into a gown.



“Now, I'm going to put some liquid into your eyes. It will feel strange, but it will heal the sores quickly. Your eyesight will be blurry for a day or so from the liquid, but that's nothing to worry about. You'll be back to reading your books in no time.”

Hermione wondered at the warming sensation from the liquid. It felt surprisingly comforting.

“Now, I'm going to cover the worst places with this cream. Please leave it on at least the rest of the day, but you may have a shower before you go to bed tonight. After your shower, come back here and I will reapply it.”

After she had applied the cream she suggested, “Now rest for a little bit, while I treat the others.”

She treated the sores on Neville's face first and, as Hermione had found, he discovered that the cream eased the pain considerably.

“What was that stuff?” Susan asked, as Madam Pomfrey smoothed cream on her arm.

“Bubotuber pus,” Madam Pomfrey replied. “Correctly processed it is very useful in curing acne, but in its raw state, well, you can see. Very painful indeed.”

“I'd noticed,” said Neville, dryly.

Harry was last, but when Madam Pomfrey finally let him go, he went straight to Hermione. Hermione was sitting up, her face and hands smothered with cream, but otherwise she seemed okay.

“I'm all right, Harry.”

“Okay, the four of you can go. Miss Bones, could you go to your dorm and bring Miss... Mrs. Potter some fresh clothes. These will need to be soaked a long while to remove the Bubotuber pus before she can wear them again.”

“Okay, Madam Pomfrey.” Susan took her own clothes into the toilet to change into them and then went out, leaving Harry and Neville to change as well.

However, it wasn't Susan who returned with Hermione's clothes, it was Professor Sprout. “Hermione, how are you feeling?”

“Sore,” then Hermione gave a little gasp and said, “Professor, we were supposed to be going to see our parents!”

“And you still can, but I think they'd prefer it if you got dressed first.”

“But how can she?” asked Harry. “If they see her like that, they'll go ape!”

The professor smiled. “Professor Dumbledore made the same objection, although not in quite those words. After talking with Professor McGonagall, I decided that they would probably be a lot more worried and upset if you didn't go. However, Professor Dumbledore will be joining us, in fact, he is waiting in my office for us, so I suggest you get dressed, Hermione. Madam Pomfrey will be going ahead of us.”

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To the Grangers' surprise, the first person through the fireplace was Madam Pomfrey. “Good afternoon, Mr. Granger, Mrs. Granger.”

“Is Hermione all right? This Professor Sprout said she'd been hurt.”

“That's why I'm here. She was hurt, but she will be all right. Her face and hands are still rather sore, but I promise you, there will be no scarring. I've come first mainly because I didn't want you to be shocked when you see her face. I'm sure that she would be grateful if you didn't touch her face and hands, likewise Harry's right arm which was also splashed.”

“What happened?”

But before Madam Pomfrey could reply the fireplace flared again and Professor Sprout stepped out, quickly followed by Harry, then Hermione and finally Professor Dumbledore.

Mrs. Granger ran to hug her daughter, taking care to not touch her face or hands. As she hugged her, Hermione burst into tears.

Seeing his daughter's face looking like someone had thrown acid into it, David Granger's own face turned so red with anger that for a moment he reminded Harry of Vernon Dursley. "Who could do this to a child?" he demanded.

"Someone very sick," replied Professor Dumbledore.

"How could it happen? They are supposed to be safe at your school."

"While different forms of hate-mail have found their way to pupils, and sometimes I have seen some forms of explosive mail find its way to my desk, we've never had someone use the owl post to attack a child before. Like you, I find it unthinkable. Any further post for Hermione or Harry will go first to their head of house, Professor Sprout, not to be read, but to be checked that it is safe. I hope that is acceptable to you."

Mr. Granger nodded. "Do you have any idea who did this?"

Professor Dumbledore's eyes fell to the floor. "No. I'm sorry. I sent all the other owls away and destroyed all the packages before they could harm her further. It was only afterwards that I thought that I should have saved them to try to trace them. I've alerted the Aurors, but I'm afraid that there isn't much to go on. Besides, the particular piece of mail responsible did its damage by exploding, so we wouldn't have had much material to work with. I'm sorry."

"Headmaster," said Mr. Granger firmly. "We may not see eye to eye always, but you never have to apologise to me for protecting our children from further harm."

"Thank you. Now, as you know, we were planning on coming to see you anyway. I'm sure you must have a lot of questions."

"You could say that." He held up a copy of the Prophet. "What's all this rubbish?"

"The ravings of a reactionary and sensationalist mind, I'm afraid."

"So all this about them being married? It's not true."

"That part is true," admitted Professor Dumbledore.

"But how can it be?"

"A soul bond is legal proof of marriage in the wizarding world, Dad," said Hermione, "and of adult status too."

"But you're only eleven!"

"Almost twelve," Hermione protested.

"That's besides the point. You're much too young to be considered adults, let alone married. How long have you known about this?"

"Hermione found out about it just a day or two ago," said Professor Sprout.

"And you are?"

"I'm sorry, I was most rude," Professor Dumbledore apologised. "This is Professor Pomona Sprout, head of Hufflepuff house, which both Harry and Hermione are in. Professor, Jean and David Granger."

"I'm pleased to meet you both. As I was saying, Hermione only just found out about it a few days ago and I can tell you that her first thought was to find a way to tell you about it. The, I deign to call it a newspaper, this morning, made it more urgent, hence my call to you this morning."

"Why weren't we all told sooner? According to you, they've been married the last three years. You must have known."

“Yes. Most of us in the wizarding world know what a bond signifies. Unfortunately, I, and I would guess everybody else, just assumed, that with all Hermione's reading, she would already know, as it is usually one of the first things someone would learn about bonds. And I am amazed that nobody mentioned it in conversation before now, although I suppose with them being so young, nobody really thought about it.”

“It wasn't in the main chapter on soul bonds,” Hermione explained. “It was just a legal note in an appendix about marriage bonds. And it doesn't change anything, we already knew the bond was forever.”

“So what does this mean? Legally, that is?”

“Well, legally they can be treated as adults and have all the rights of adults. They can legally use magic out of school, Apparate, things like that. They also have access to the Potter vault, without restrictions.”

“There is one other thing, the thing I originally wanted to see you both about when I spoke to you last night.” Professor Sprout explained. “Hermione, Harry. As you are legally a married couple, you are entitled to a separate room if you wish, rather than sleep in the dorms.”

Both Mr. and Mrs. Granger looked most unhappy at the thought.

Hermione glanced at Harry and replied, “No, thank you, Professor. I'm just beginning to make new friends.”

“Good. I hoped you'd say that, but I had to ask.”

Mr. Granger held up the Prophet again. “So what are you going to do about this, Professor Dumbledore?”

“I will tell them the truth,” he replied.

Professor Sprout was last to leave and she didn't go straight into the Floo. “Mr. and Mrs. Granger, I have the privilege of having Harry and Hermione in my house at Hogwarts. They have not had an easy first week, but you can be proud of how they have handled themselves. I

am no Professor Dumbledore, but I can assure you that I will care for them both to the best of my ability.”

Mr. Granger shook her hand. “Thank you.” And a moment later she was gone.

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Author's note...

For those saving this story, I've corrected a typo in chapter 30, so you might want to re-download that chapter.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena, The\_Scribbler and Minara.

Please review.

Brian

The Harmony bond, chapter thirty-five.

By Brian Grove brian at rescueddoggies dot com

Can anyone help?

Well I finally got Spellcheck to work, which it hasn't since I upgraded to Open Office 3. It was running, but didn't find even deliberate misspellings I put in to test it. Now it runs properly in US, Canadian and even Australian English, but I can't even FIND a dictionary for British English any more although it's listed as an option under tools languages.

Brian

Disclaimer:-

Still not mine, sniff, sniff.

In the previous chapter...

Hermione was attacked by a Howler...

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As they entered the Hufflepuff's common room, the conversation became quickly silent and Hermione felt herself being stared at by everyone. One of the sixth year prefects stood up and approached Hermione. "Hi, Hermione. I, er, we, just want you to know that nobody here believes that rubbish that bitch wrote. How are you?"

"Thanks. I'm okay."

"If anyone gives you any trouble, just let us know, that's all."

"And don't worry," said one of the older girls, "Pomfrey's good with Bubotuber pus. It won't leave any scars."

Hermione forced a smile, annoyed at herself for letting Skeeter's comments about her being plain and unattractive hurt her more than anything else she'd said. Is that how people saw her? Was that how Harry saw her?

Harry, meanwhile, was just wondering how the girl knew of Madam Pomfrey's expertise with Bubotuber pus!

During breakfast the next morning Susan Bones began to read the copy of the Prophet which had just been delivered to her. To nobody's surprise, it had a front page article referring to the previous day's attack...

The Daily Prophet

Attack On Hogwarts Children

by Rita Skeeter

Yesterday, there was a cowardly attack on some of the children at Hogwarts, when a Howler sent to the new Mrs. Potter exploded, injuring her and others with Bubotuber pus.

The headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, issued a joint statement with the Ministry. "We are disgusted by this unprecedented attack and measures have been taken to prevent it happening again. The Department of Magical Law Enforcement will leave no stone uncovered to discover the perpetrator of this attack."

Notably absent from the statement was any explanation as to how such a dangerous object managed to reach the children in what is supposed to be the most magically protected building in Britain.

We here at the Prophet would like to add our voice to those condemning this outrage. While we believe that we have a duty to expose wrongdoing in our world, we would never condone violent attacks on a child. In fact, not only was the new Mrs. Potter injured in the attack, but several innocent children were also hurt, including Susan Bones, niece of Amelia Bones, head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.



It is understood that all those hurt in the attack were quickly treated and released from the Hogwarts hospital wing. We wish them well in their recovery.

However, we do hope that the fact that her niece appears to be a close friend of the Potters will not discourage Madam Bones from investigating the behaviour of the new Mrs. Potter with as much enthusiasm as investigating her attacker.

"They've got a cheek," Susan cried, outraged, "suggesting that you weren't an innocent victim, especially when it was their fault in the first place." She grinned for a moment. "I think my aunt is more likely to investigate that Skeeter woman than you. I don't know why she sends me this rag every day, but she says I should know what is going on."

Hermione nodded. Now she was protected from further attacks by mail, the knowledge that those close to her supported her was far more important than Rita Skeeter's rantings.

To her surprise there was a further article about her and Harry, two days later. Once again Susan read it and handed it to Hermione.

The Daily Prophet

Prophet a Victim of Lies

by Rita Skeeter

After a thorough investigation, it has come to the notice of this newspaper that we were deliberately misled in the matter of Harry and Hermione Potter.

Yesterday evening it was revealed that Mr. and Mrs. Potter have not recently married, but in fact formed a magical soul bond over three years ago at the unprecedented age of eight years old. Given that a soul bond cannot be manipulated into being, any suggestion that Muggle-born Hermione could deliberately bring this about at their first meeting is therefore incorrect. Furthermore, school authorities have



they had been together briefly in Muggle school had Harry seen her so eager to answer every question and her increasing bossiness when it came to doing homework was getting on everyone's nerves, even Harry's.

By the end of October even the teachers were concerned, well, some of them. Professor Flitwick loved to show off how well Hermione could do things, but he failed to notice the resentment on the faces of the other students and the mutterings of 'insufferable' and 'know-it-all' that were common when Hermione was answering a question. Professor Snape was the opposite and even went as far as calling her an insufferable know-it-all in one lesson.

One evening, Professor Sprout brought up the subject of Hermione with Professor McGonagall. "You've known her much longer than I have. Was she always this..." she struggled to find a word... "exasperating?"

"I didn't really know her that well, but I don't remember her being like this. Perhaps you should ask Madam Pomfrey?"

Madam Pomfrey, on hearing how Hermione was behaving, was also more than a little concerned. "The first thing to find out is if this is a recent change, or whether she was like this before," she advised.

The following Saturday Professor Sprout took the opportunity to go and see Miss Collier, Hermione's old teacher. What she learned concerned her.

Things came to a head at Halloween. "Well, it's all a complete waste of time," Hermione had argued, referring to the frantic preparations for the Halloween feast that night. "We're supposed to be here studying, not acting like a lot of five year olds. Pumpkin faces indeed."

Even Harry had got annoyed at that. Putting down the brush with which he was decorating his own pumpkin, he turned and said. "Well, if you don't like it, you don't have to come."

Hermione had stormed off in a huff.

“Really, Harry,” said Ron. “She's your wife. Can't you DO something about her?”

“You'll have to do something,” agreed Susan. “People are starting to avoid her. The way she'd going, she'll have no friends left.”

“She's hardly got any now,” pointed out Neville. “Even the twins got fed up with her nagging.”

“EXCUSE ME,” said Hermione, loudly, almost pushing Neville off his chair as she reached for her books. “I forgot my...” This was followed by a loud sniff and Hermione running out of the hall.

“I think she heard,” said Susan.

“She'll calm down,” said Ron.

But Harry wasn't so sure.

The Halloween feast was spectacular, but Harry's mind was on Hermione, at least the part of it that wasn't enjoying the tastiest sausages he'd ever eaten.

“Have you seen Hermione?” he had asked Neville.

“No. Why? Where is she?”

“If he knew that he wouldn't be asking?” Ron pointed out. At least, that's what the others thought he said. It was difficult to tell as he spoke with his mouth full.

“Susan,” Harry called across to Hermione's closest girl friend. “Is Hermione still up in your dorm?”

“No.” Susan got up and walked across to Harry. “She's in the girls' toilets, crying. One of the Patil twins says she's been there all afternoon and won't come out.”

“I'd better go and see her.” Harry sighed, pushing his plate away from him and standing up.

His action was interrupted by the main door opening with a bang and Professor Quirrell running into the hall in a panic. All the assembled could get from his terrified stutterings was "Troll, in the dungeon!"

Total panic descended on the hall until Professor Dumbledore commanded silence. "Prefects. Take your students back to your common rooms. Teachers will follow me to the dungeons."

It was Susan who realised it first. "Hermione! Those toilets are near the dungeons. She won't know about the troll!"

"We have to get her," said Ron.

"Especially as we're why she's there," Neville pointed out firmly.

Harry said nothing to that. He was feeling guilty enough already. He just let Susan lead the way.

"You go in first," Harry said. "You're a girl," he pointed out.

Susan shrugged and opened the door. A succession of loud sounds struck Harry's ears, a loud roar, a crash that sounded like a demolition ball had hit something, and two screams.

Barging past Susan, Harry ran into the room. He didn't even notice that Ron and Neville had run in with him. Seeing Hermione cowering in the corner he ran straight past the enormous troll, slipped on the wet floor caused by the broken pipes leaking everywhere, and lay dazed on the floor, not far from Hermione.

As the troll raised the club he was holding, ready to smash it down on Harry, Neville grabbed the troll by the leg and, not knowing what else to do, bit into the leg.

The troll, now enraged, kicked Neville away and turned on him. Having dropped his wand when he pulled it out, Ron had already picked it up and, pointing it at the troll's club, yelled, "Wingardium Leviosa!"

The startled troll simply looked up at the club, then reached up for it.

“Hit him with it,” screamed Susan.

Ron dropped the club on the troll’s head. The troll staggered for a moment then just shook its head.

“Harder!” Susan screamed again. The troll, distracted by her scream, kicked out at her as another hit left it dazed.

The troll began to stagger again and for a moment they all thought it would fall, but reacting clearly for a moment, it reached out for the club and turned towards Ron.

“Hermione! Do whatever it is you do together!” yelled Susan as she grabbed the troll's leg.

Hermione grabbed Harry's hand with one of her hands and pulled out his wand with the other. “Protego!”

The door opened as the troll simply exploded, covering Ron, Susan, Neville in its remains, along with Professor McGonagall, who had just entered. The sudden smell was overpowering.

Before saying anything, the Professor took out her wand and banished the mess. The smell, thankfully, disappeared as well.

She asked, “What are you five doing in here?” speaking rather more sharply than she had intended due to the shock.

“They came for me,” Hermione stammered.

“And why were you here, Miss, er Hermione, when everyone was told to go to their common rooms?”

Suddenly embarrassed, Hermione hesitated.

“Thank you, Minerva. I'll take it from here,” said the welcome voice of Professor Sprout. “I think I'll take Hermione, Harry and Susan to Madam Pomfrey. Can you all walk?”

Hermione and Harry had to help Susan, but they could manage to walk.

“If you, Mr. Weasley and you, Mr. Longbottom can both walk, I suggest you also go to the Hospital wing to have Madam Pomfrey check you over.”

Thankful for the chance to escape further questions, Ron and Neville almost ran out of the toilets.

As they walked up the stairs, Ron noticed Professor Snape limping, leaving a trail of drips of blood on the floor.

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Author's note...

The butterfly effect – the bond changed them enough to put them in Hufflepuff. Being in Hufflepuff made them friends with Susan Bones, niece of the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. Indirectly they now have another powerful voice acting on their behalf.

The US company I work for might have abused the law to find a way to have us working longer hours with far fewer breaks than the minimum required legally, but now many of the jobs are going to the Philippines where they'll work even more cheaply than us. So the company has decided to move all its Argentine workforce to its location in the Capital, and cancel the subsidised transportation between the two locations (not that I used it previously as I didn't have to go into the Capital except on occasional Saturdays when it didn't run anyway).

This move will mean my travelling well over three hours each way to and from work every day. Added to my nine hour working day, a fifteen hour day BEFORE I do things like looking after and feeding myself and the dogs will leave me little or no time to write during the week and probably too exhausted to do much at weekends. As the extra bus fares will be over 10% of my monthly income, I may have to

work even longer hours to survive, but, with my health being poor right now, I'm not sure I can manage that journey for long anyway.

But not being eligible for any benefits and so far having no luck finding alternative work, I'm not sure what alternatives I have.

Right now, the worrying over all this has already affected my writing, I'm afraid.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena, The\_Scribbler and Minara.

Please review.

Brian



## Chapter thirty-six.

By Brian Grove

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### Disclaimer:-

Still not mine, sniff, sniff.

In the previous chapter...

The Prophet admitted the truth (sort of!) and Hermione, Harry, Susan, Ron and Neville faced a troll...

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Of course, the story of what happened in the girl's toilets with the troll quickly got around the school, being exaggerated with every telling. Of those involved, it made the greatest effect on Neville Longbottom, unless you count the troll.

From being looked down upon as a coward, suddenly he and Ron were being feted as heroes. Being hoisted into the air and carried into lunch the next day by the Weasley twins seemed to put a cap on their new status. Neither of them could keep huge grins from their faces, but better was to come.

At lunchtime, an owl dropped an envelope in front of Neville. "It's from my Gran," he said, shocked.

“Well, open it then,” said Fred.

"It's not a Howler," George pointed out.

“Mr. Longbottom!”

“Y... yes Professor?”

Professor McGonagall smiled warmly. "If I might suggest, you would perhaps like to open that letter in private. My office, perhaps?"

It was some time later that Neville left her office to find her waiting outside on a chair she had conjured. His eyes were red. "You told her?"

"Yes, Mr. Longbottom. I thought she ought to know."

"She said..." he sniffed loudly. "She said my parents would be proud of me."

"Mr. Longbottom. I knew your parents for quite a few years. I can tell you that they would have been proud of you anyway, but, yes, today they would be extremely proud of their son."

Neville nodded.

"Now, can I suggest that you wash your face before going to see everyone else?"

"Thank you, Professor."

"You are most welcome, Mr. Longbottom."

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At dinner that evening the other four also received letters from their parents. Harry and Hermione shared a letter. Unlike the others, along with congratulations on how they had behaved, was a note that they had also written to Professor Dumbledore demanding to know how a troll had been allowed to endanger their children's lives in the first place.

After dinner, Hermione had been asked to go to see Professor Sprout.

"Come in. Take a seat, please."

"Am I in trouble, Professor?"

“Not that I know of. Are you?”

“What do you mean?”

“From what I hear, you were in the toilets all afternoon, crying, when, I might add, you should have been in lessons.”

“I'll make them up.”

“Of that I have no doubt. I am more interested in why.”

Hermione stayed silent, unwilling to blame her friends.

“Nothing to say?”

“No, Professor.”

“Very well. Then I will begin. Your professors have been very concerned at your behaviour recently, not that you have done anything wrong, but you seem to be a little, shall I say, over eager.”

“What's wrong with that?” Hermione protested.

“Nothing, unless it drives people away from you and leaves you alone.”

Hermione said nothing.

“I wanted to know if this was normal for you, so I spoke to your previous teacher, Miss Collier. She tells me that you used to be like that a long time ago, but hadn't been since the wizarding junior school opened. So I was very concerned about what made you change.”

Hermione kept on looking down at the ground.

“Hermione, in your first week here, you went through some terrible experiences. Miss Collier suggested that you might be suffering from what Muggles call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Madam Pomfrey

has a book about that and thinks that you have been reverting to your old behaviour patterns to push people away and feel safe on your own."

"But why?"

"If you don't let people in, they can't hurt you, can they?"

Hermione shook her head slowly.

"This is what we are going to do. Once a week, you will spend a couple of hours with Madam Pomfrey, and once a week you will come to see me. If you like, you can just tell me how you are getting on, little things, it doesn't matter, it is up to you. You can even sit here in silence if you like, though I gather that you aren't very good at silence."

Professor Sprout was smiling and even Hermione had to grin at her slight dig. As even Remus had been forced to admit, Hermione never used five words when fifty would do.

"I would suggest cutting back on the studying. No," she added quickly at the look of horror on Hermione's face, "I am not suggesting failing to do your homework, but an answer long enough to be a small encyclopaedia is not really required when you have been asked to do a twelve-inch essay. You might go easier on your friends as well."

"Yes, Professor."

"And I suggest you go to see Harry now. He's been trying not to show it, but he's worried sick about you."

"Thank you, Professor."

"You're welcome. And well done on destroying that troll."

Hermione looked shamefaced. "Actually, I panicked. It was Susan who told me what to do."

"It sound like you're safer with your friends than without them, doesn't it? Just like all of us. Run along now. I have marking to do."

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Another, less pleasant, conversation was going on elsewhere..

"But My Lord, we are not ready."

"Enough. He is becoming suspicious. And I was nearly exposed last night. We must act now."

"So soon after the troll?"

"Yes. The troll should have killed the girl. It didn't. We can wait no longer. The next time the old fool is away, we will get it. And then..."

"And then?"

"Then we kill the girl and my safety is ensured forever."

"I don't understand."

"Even a fool like you should know the unique weakness a Bond brings about. Enough with this. You don't have to understand. You just have to obey."

"As you command, my Lord."

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The autumn term grew weirder and weirder for Hermione. As a consequence of the on-going conversations that she was having with her professors, Hermione found herself in the constant, happy company of Harry, Ron, Neville and Susan. As the weeks passed, they became closer and closer friends and went everywhere together.

One unusually bright afternoon in late November, during tea at Hagrid's, they discovered that he had somehow won a dragon egg from someone in The Hog's Head pub in the nearby Hogsmeade Village. In organising the effort to get the baby dragon safely out of the country and to the dragon reserve for which Ron's brother Charlie worked, they all managed to get themselves caught by Professors Sprout and McGonagall, thanks to having been overheard by Draco Malfoy.

Professor McGonagall's immediate reaction was to deduct points, but Professor Sprout wanted to know why they had been outside before deciding the punishment.

At their hesitance, she asked them, "Are you trying to protect someone?"

Professor McGonagall turned to Draco Malfoy and said, "You may leave. We will notify Professor Snape of your punishment."

"My...?"

"Yes, Mr. Malfoy. Whatever your reason, you were also out of bounds at night. I will see you in the morning."

As Draco stormed off, she turned back to the others. "Hermione?"

Hermione remained tight-lipped.

"I promise you, you will not get anyone else in trouble," said Professor Sprout, "will they, Minerva?"

Professor McGonagall didn't look one hundred per cent happy about that, but nodded her head in agreement.

"Hagrid had a baby dragon. We had to get it out tonight, so some of Charlie's friends could take it away to the refuge. That's Ron's brother."

"Yes, Hermione. I know who Charlie is," Professor McGonagall smiled. "The fool."

“Charlie not a fool!” Ron protested angrily.

“Not Charlie,” the professor reassured him. “Hagrid.”

“Under the circumstances, I think we can forego the points, shall we, Minerva?”

“Very well. But all of you will have to serve detention... I believe Hagrid had, as a matter of fact, asked for students to help him out this Saturday night.”

Professor Sprout looked unusually stern. “It will take most of the night, and you can tell him that I still expect him to de-slug the cabbages on Sunday as he promised.”

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The detention nearly ended in disaster when after splitting into two groups, Harry came up against a dark shape in the forest. He collapsed to his knees from the pain in his scar and was about to be overcome when a creature that appeared to be half-horse, half-man saved him by driving the creature off, into the woods. Holding out his hand, the creature helped Harry to his feet. “You took a chance, wandering into these woods alone, Harry Potter.”

“I wasn't alone. Malfoy ran off. Where's Susan?” Harry panicked slightly, looking around until he found her.

The creature looked down at her. “She will be all right. She has just fainted.”

“What are you? And how do you know my name?”

“I am a Centaur, Harry Potter. Many, many things are known about you and about your destiny. The stars reveal much.”

“But how did you know....what was that thing? And why was that thing drinking Unicorn blood?”

“Unicorn blood will keep you alive, no matter what your condition, but at a terrible price. You will have a cursed life, a half-life.”

“Who would want that?”

“Can you think of nobody, Harry Potter?”

“You mean? That thing, was Voldemort?”

“It is dangerous for you out here, Harry Potter. Especially now.”

“Why now?”

“Do you not know what is hidden in Hogwarts at this very moment?”

“No. We know something is, though.”

“The Philosopher's Stone, which can give the elixir of life”

The same night, Ron, who had been in the group with Hagrid, had managed to get out of him that the thing the three-headed dog was guarding had something to do with Nicolas Flamel.

Hagrid escorted them directly to their various dormitories and, as it was nearly dawn, ordered them not to leave them until dinner time.

The group got up in time for dinner and sat together and shared what they had learned. Ron asked, “But what has Nicolas Flamel to do with it?”

“To do with what? Why would naughty little firsties want to know about him?”

“Do you know who he is, Fred?” asked Ron.

“I'm George, he's Fred?”

“Stop it!” snapped Hermione. “This is important.”



Something in her worried eyes more than her voice made them take her seriously. "We'll tell you. But whatever you're doing, we're in."

Hermione hesitated, but Harry said at once, "Okay."

The twins pulled from their pockets bunches of chocolate frog cards, which they shuffled until one of them said "Here it is" and handed it to Hermione. She looked puzzled. "On the back," they said.

"This is Dumbledore's card." She read it out loud... "With his partner and friend, Nicolas Flamel, the only known maker of the Philosopher's stone. Harry. It's true. It's here."

"I know. The centaur told me last night. He said it can bring somebody back to life."

"There's more Harry. What aren't you saying?" Hermione demanded to know.

"He said... that it was Voldemort killing the unicorns."

"And Snape's after the stone for You-Know-Who," finished Ron. "And Hagrid admitted that he told the guy in the pub how to get past Fluffy."

They ran to Dumbledore's office, but nothing could make it open up.

"Professor McGonagall! We have to see Professor Dumbledore."

"The Headmaster is away on Ministry Business until the morning."

"But it's about the Philosopher's stone," Harry cried out.

"How do you know about that?"

"Snape's trying to steal it."

"Nonsense. The stone is well-protected. Now be off with you before I remember those points I almost deducted for your dragon escapade."

The troll-bashing five, as they had been nicknamed went back to the twins to try to decide what to do.

"Dumbledore's away," said Harry. "Snape'll get it tonight."

"We'll just have to stop him," said one of the twins.

"S...stop Snape?" asked Neville.

"Don't you see, Neville?" Hermione explained. "If we don't stop him, Voldemort will be back. I don't like it any more than you do."

"I won't be much use to you," said Neville.

"It's okay," said George. "You don't have to come."

"I'm coming," he said firmly. "I might not be much use, but I'm coming."

"We can't all go," Ron objected. "We'll get caught."

"No, we won't," promised Fred. "We'll come for you all. We won't get caught."

"We never do," added George.

"How?" asked Susan.

"That, you will have to wait until tonight to find out."

As the others went off towards their beds, Susan took Harry's arm. "I think perhaps I shouldn't come tonight."

"You don't have to if you don't want to."

"I want to, it's just..." Susan looked down at the ground. "You could have been killed last night and I just fainted. I guess that's why I'm not in Gryffindor, huh?"

Harry gave a rueful grin. "Nor am I, remember?"

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Author's note...

FULLMETAL, while being too cowardly to sign his review raised a valid point about following canon. In canon Voldemort used the troll to distract everyone and make an attempt to get past fluffy, so he did the same in my story. JKR used the incident to bring together Hermione with Ron and Harry. I used it to knit the five together AND to be the first time Hermione has used the power they have together. Sorry someone was not paying enough attention to notice that.

This story WILL follow canon to a large extent BUT anything which would be changed by the bond or by the ripple effect caused by the bond will change. Those changes will grow. In the next chapter a major event is brought forward due to Voldemort's reaction to the power Harry showed in rescuing Hermione from the Slytherins. In the following chapter something very major which does not happen in canon totally changes their year one, but it comes about BECAUSE of Voldemort's knowledge of the bond.

On a personal note. As you know from reading my author's notes, I suffer from quite severe depression following my wife's death as well as other growing health problems. Thank you FULLMETAL for kicking me when I'm down. If I ever abandon this story, it'll be people like you that make me do it. Thankfully most readers have some humanity.

Thank you to all those who wrote with sympathy and understanding. It means a lot.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena, The\_Scribbler and Minara.

Please review.

Brian

Chapter thirty-seven.

By Brian Grove

brian at rescueddoggies dot com

Disclaimer:-

Still not mine, sniff, sniff.

In the previous chapter...

Harry and the others found out the Philosopher's Stone is at Hogwarts and that Voldemort is nearby...

IMPORTANT

A lot of reviewers spotted that I'd jumped ahead in time to April. That was a typo on my part. This is still December... The key was in this section...

"But My Lord, we are not ready."

"Enough. He is becoming suspicious. And I was nearly exposed last night. We must act now."

"So soon after the troll?"

"Yes. The troll should have killed the girl. It didn't. We can wait no longer. The next time the old fool is away, we will get it. And then..."

Voldemort was concerned enough about Harry's display of power in Slytherin and Hermione's blasting the troll to bring his plans forward. I've now corrected the mistakes in the previous chapter and reuploaded it.

I should say that Nachoman had also pointed out about not being April, but I still missed it!

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Thanks to a magical map the twins had in their possession, which showed where everyone was at all times, all seven of them had been able to get to the third floor corridor without being spotted.

“So we're going to stop Snape,” said Ron. “Just one problem. How the hell do we get past that bloody great dog?”

“Language, Ron,” said Hermione without even thinking. In their years at the Weasley Junior School, Hermione had copied Mrs. Weasley and had always told Ron off for using words his mother would object to. It had started as a joke, but somehow stuck.

“Easy,” replied the twins together.

“It's a dog,” said Fred.

“So we distract it with something tasty,” explained George.

“Just make sure it's tastier than first years, can you?” asked Susan, nervously.

Hermione noticed that Susan had grasped Harry's hand for reassurance and felt a momentary twinge of jealousy. A glance and a smile from Harry had made that unworthy thought disappear. It was just Harry being Harry, as usual.

They opened the door to find the dog asleep and a magical harp playing. “Snape's already been here,” said Harry.

But as they stepped towards the trapdoor, the harp stopped playing and the dog began to stir.

Now they found out why the twins had insisted on them bringing half the cushions from the common rooms. As the dog raised its heads, the twins turned them into giant white rabbits with antlers.

The three heads immediately turned to attack the rabbits only to find that these rabbits fought back and their teeth were sharp.

Harry had been momentarily distracted by the fighting rabbits, wondering how many Monty Python films the twins had watched with Hermione's father when they'd stayed at the Grangers' house a few times.

"Come on!" Hermione shouted, opening the trapdoor. "Quickly!"

She was so eager that she knocked into Neville, who fell down the hole. His panicked scream ended quickly. "I'm all right," he yelled. "It's soft."

The others followed quickly. It was soft, but suddenly they found tendrils creeping around them.

"It's all right, it's only Devil's Snare," explained Neville, sounding relieved. "Just relax, or it'll kill you faster."

"Great," complained Ron. "Now I can really relax."

"All we have to do is relax and stay still and it'll eventually just drop us."

"Neville," said George, "I hate to tell you this, but we are in a bit of a hurry."

"Yeah," said Ron, still struggling with the tightening plant. "Snape's ahead of us, remember."

"Okay. It loves the dark and moisture. It hates sunlight and fire."

"But how can we make fire?" asked Hermione with a wavering voice, keeping her eyes closed as to not see how some vines crossed over her face. "There's no wood."

To her surprise, Susan laughed. "Hermione, you're a witch." With some difficulty, she slowly eased her wand out and pointed it above them. "Lumos Solis!" she shouted.

The whole area above them became so bright they had to close their eyes. They felt the tendrils shrivel and bend down and soon they were falling again, not so far this time. Susan landed on top of Hermione, knocking her breathless for a moment.

“Sorry.”

“Where did you learn that spell?” asked Fred.

“From my aunt,” Susan explained. “She's always having to give parties for the Ministry, and I go over to help look after the younger kids. They tell all the kids to have fun in the pool to leave the adults in peace to talk. If it's not warm enough, she taught me that spell to make it seem sunny. You have to be careful, though; I made it too strong once and got sunburn, not to say it's a drain on your magic.”

They were walking down a long corridor, lit only by the lights from the twins' wands.

Finally they reached a large room full of giant insects.

“What are all these insects?” asked Harry.

“They're not insects,” said Hermione. “They're keys. One must open that door.”

“I think we're supposed to use that broom,” said George, “to find the right key.”

He mounted the broom, but as he took off he was immediately bombarded with the other keys. He got off quickly.

“Your turn, Harry,” he said. “Fred and I will target the other keys.”

“Why me? Why not Ron? He's flown more than me.”

“Everyone heard how you spotted that Remembrall of Neville's from way up high, then dived down so everyone thought you'd crash...”

"I still haven't forgiven him for that," said Hermione.

"Okay." Harry mounted the broom. As with George, the other keys immediately attacked him, but this time the twins began firing spells at the other keys, gradually reducing their number. Hermione quickly copied the spell and joined in the target practice. She showed the others how to do it and Susan and Ron joined in as well.

"I can't," moaned Neville. "I broke my wand. It must have been when I landed on it. My Gran's gonna kill me!"

"You can look at any we knock down, just to make sure it isn't the right one," said Hermione.

The cloud of keys slowly diminished until finally Harry soared to the ceiling and made a grab at a key. He missed the first time, then following it in a dive, finally catching it close to the ground so that the others have to dive out of his way.

Hermione brushed herself off and took the key. The door opened silently.

"It's a graveyard," said Susan.

"No," Ron contradicted her. "It's a chessboard."

He tried to run across to the door at the far side, but the row of pawns brought their swords up to block his way.

"I think we have to play our way across," said Hermione.

"That's Ron's job, then," said Fred.

Ron ordered one of the pieces to move, but nothing happened. He tried again, and still nothing.

The white queen pointed at Ron and then at the white king.

"I think you have to be a piece," said Susan.



Yet again none of the white pieces moved.

"Maybe we all have to be pieces," suggested Hermione. Ron looked shocked. "What's wrong with that?"

"In chess, you have to sacrifice pieces to win. I can't keep seven pieces safe."

"Oh. Well, we should choose some to continue and the rest to go back and get help," she replied.

"I think Fred and George should go on," said Harry. "They're the oldest, they know the most spells."

"No," said Fred. "You have to go on, so you have to be king, Harry."

"Why me?"

"Harry," said George, unusually gently for him. "This is You-Know-Who."

"Voldemort," snapped Harry.

"All right. This is Voldemort. I just know it has to be you."

"He's right, Harry," said Fred.

"That's sorted then," said Ron. "The twins and Harry to go on. I guess I have to play as well."

"Harry, I don't want to leave you," said Hermione tearfully.

"I'll be okay. Now, go."

But as Hermione, Neville and Susan tried to leave, the door to the room slammed shut.

"I guess we all play," said Susan, trembling.

Ron looked like he'd seen a ghost. "I can't."

"What do you mean?" asked Harry.

"Suppose this is like Wizard's chess? You could all be killed. I can't keep seven of us safe."

"You have to play," said Neville. "Harry has to stop... Voldemort," he swallowed, "Nobody else can play chess like you can."

"He's right, little brother."

Ron nodded, though he seemed in a daze. He made Harry king and assigned pieces to all the others.

The whites were brutal in the way they disposed of the black pieces, so everyone stood in dread when, after a while, a white bishop approached Fred. He stood horrified and nobody would ever hold him accountable as he pissed himself when the bishop raised its sceptre. But then, uncharacteristically, the bishop pommelled him and slid his body out, rather than just trampling him and throwing him out.

Ron almost jumped from his knight until George shouted, "Ron! You can't. You're still playing." Only the slight waver in his voice gave away how George was feeling at that moment.

Susan was next. "I'm sorry, Susan, after this move, I have to let you be taken."

Susan was on the other knight and gripped the horse's neck tightly. "Do you think they'd notice if I jumped off?" she asked.

"Why didn't I think of that? Try it Susan."

When the piece stopped moving, Susan jumped off.

The white pieces remained still, refusing to take Susan's piece.

"I guess they noticed," she shrugged, trying to make light of it as she climbed back aboard the knight and once again gripped it around the neck and closed her eyes.

Harry called to her, "If we get out of this, don't ever tell me you're not brave."

She nodded and seconds later the knight was smashed aside and it and Susan landed in a crumpled heap.

Ron's already pale face became even paler as George was sacrificed. His last words to Ron were, "You have to keep going."

Neville was next and he couldn't take his eyes off the Queen as she advanced on him. His words, "Good Luck, Harry. Stop the bastard for us," were quickly silenced.

Only Harry, Hermione and Ron were left. Both sides were left with around half a dozen pieces, while the wreckage was strewn around the room. "Harry, I have to sacrifice myself. When I do, Hermione, move to F8 and checkmate the king. With Harry where he is, the king won't have a way out."

Harry nodded dumbly and Hermione bit her nails, then he grimaced and she whimpered as the white queen advanced on Ron, and then backhanded him hard enough to send him out of the board. Feeling nauseous, Hermione moved three places sideways, turned diagonally and announced "Checkmate!" to the distant white king at A3. The king produced a dagger, then slipped it into his chest and the entire white chess set crumbled into rubble.

Finally the game was over and they went to check on their fallen friends. "They're alive," said Hermione. Harry breathed a sigh of relief.

The door, which had opened as the black king had surrendered, was beginning to close. "Come on, quick!" Harry shouted, and they ran through the door just in time.

They passed a large dead troll, which smelled terrible. "Pity Neville's not here, he could have had a feast," Harry commented as he stepped through yet another door.

As they reached a row of potion bottles, fire flared up around them in a circle, purple by the door they entered and blue by the next door. A piece of paper contained a riddle.

Hermione stood there studying it for a while. Harry stayed silent, he knew not to interrupt Hermione when she was concentrating. Finally Hermione said, "It's easy. You take this one to go on."

"But there's only enough for one."

"The twins were right," Hermione said reluctantly. "It has to be you. I know it."

"What will you do?"

"This potion will let me go back." She drank it and said, "Now you."

Harry nodded and drank his potion. Hermione stepped back through the flames and called out that she was unharmed. Harry walked forward through the flames and through the door beyond...

"You?" he cried, seeing Professor Quirrell. "But Snape?"

Professor Quirrell laughed. "That overgrown bat?" he sneered, then turned back to the large mirror he was looking at. "I see myself with the stone, but how do I get it."

A voice said "The stone is in the mirror. Let me speak to the boy."

Quirrell unwrapped his turban and turned around.

"So. Harry Potter. At last. See what you have reduced me to? A parasite. You owe me, so now you will help me."

"I'll never help you."

"Use the boy to get the stone. Put him in front of the mirror," Voldemort ordered.

The Professor waved his wand and Harry found himself facing the mirror.

“Harry!” Hermione's voice screamed in his head. “Destroy the mirror.”

He thought back, “But if the stone is in there Nicolas Flamel will die.”

“If you don't, Voldemort will get it. DO IT, HARRY!”

Taking Quirrell by surprise, Harry pulled out his wand and pointed it at the mirror. Before Quirrell could stop him, Harry had used the spell they'd used to blow the keys out of the air and the mirror cracked into small pieces.

Quirrell was furious and reached for Harry, but his hand burned as he touched the boy.

“We'll get him later,” snapped the voice. “Get us out of here.”

Quirrell seemed to turn into black smoke and fled from the scene, all the doors opening for him as he fled.

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Madam Pomfrey had managed to revive the others in a short space of time and all of them except Harry, Hermione and Ron were enjoying being treated as heroes.

“Why aren't you enjoying it, Ron?” Hermione asked him. “I thought you'd have loved it.”

Her teasing fell flat as he looked at her with pain in his eyes. “I could have killed all of us. We didn't know they'd only be stunned. I could have killed them.”

They knew he was referring to the chessboard. “You had no choice, Ron,” said Harry quietly.

"You think I don't know that?" he almost shouted. "It would still have been me that killed them. I'm a hero because I nearly killed the twins, Neville and Susan. It just isn't right."

"I understand," said Harry.

"How can you?" Ron spat.

"He understands because he's a hero because of what his mother did when he was a baby."

"At least you can remember it," said Harry, bitterly.

"I wish I couldn't," said Ron.

"And it's not just that," Harry pointed out. "I basically killed Nicolas Flamel and his wife by destroying the mirror, yet I'm the great hero yet again. I'm supposed to feel good about it."

Ron nodded understandingly and the three walked outside for some peace.

Later when Harry and Hermione were alone, they finally talked about what had happened. "We can talk in our heads. I heard you telling me to destroy the mirror."

"I know. But it still seems to be only when we really need it that the connection gets stronger."

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To the puzzlement of the rest of the school, Ron, Harry and Hermione remained rather subdued for the few weeks until the school broke up for Christmas.

Christmas back at the Grangers was a welcome relief for Harry and Hermione. They'd all promised Mrs. Weasley to go to the Burrow to celebrate the New Year, but Christmas was just the four of them.

As they were eating their Christmas dinner they heard a loud bang somewhere outside, almost like a giant electrical short circuit. Mr. Granger got up and opened the front door.

Nothing.

"Stay here," he ordered as he walked outside and down the path to their gate.

The others ignored him and stepped outside the door.

Mr. Granger collapsed as he was hit by a green light. Mrs. Granger ran to her fallen husband and was swept aside, crashing into the fence.

Instinctively Hermione grasped Harry's hand. They reached for their wands and pointed them at the dark figure of Professor Quirrell before them.

Their powerful shield pushed him back for a moment, then he flicked his hand and it was gone. "You think you can defeat me, Potter? This is what happens to those who defy me."

He pointed his wand at Mrs. Granger and she screamed in agony.

"The Cruciatus Curse. One of my favourites. I wonder how long she can take before her mind goes."

"Stop it!" Hermione screamed. "Please!" She ran towards her mother but was frozen in place before she got half way.

"Now, Harry Potter. Let's see how long your bond mate can take it before I kill her."

It was Hermione's turn to collapse screaming. Even over her screaming, Harry could hear the laughter from Quirrell.

Then it seemed like the floodgate opened and he could feel the pain. In seconds, he collapsed, still watching Hermione, unable to turn his

eyes away, his whole body seeming to burn with pain and Quirrell's laughter echoing in his head.

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Author's note...

Next time I'll trust my betas and check with them before making a "correction"! Of course there is nothing in canon (only in fanon) to say that Susan's parents are dead. If they had been, one of my excellent betas would have spotted the error. My alteration to chapter 35 remains, however, as it works either way.

I know the Latin for Light is Lumen, not Lumos, but as Nachoman pointed out Lumos is used for just about every light spell in canon and fanon.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena, The\_Scribbler and Minara.

Please review.

Brian



## Chapter Thirty-eight.

By Brian Grove

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Disclaimer:-

Still not mine, sniff, sniff.

In the previous chapter...

Harry confronted Quirrell/Voldemort and destroyed the mirror of Erised. Voldemort struck back by attacking the Grangers on Christmas day...

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From Chapter Thirty-Seven...

He pointed his wand at Mrs. Granger and she screamed in agony.

"The Cruciatus Curse. One of my favourites. I wonder how long she can take before her mind goes."

"Stop it!" Hermione screamed. "Please!" She ran towards her mother but was frozen in place before she got half way.

"Now, Harry Potter. Let's see how long your bond mate can take it before I kill her."

It was Hermione's turn to collapse screaming. Even over her screaming, Harry could hear the laughter from Quirrell.

Then it seemed like the floodgate opened and he could feel the pain. In seconds, he collapsed, still watching Hermione, unable to turn his eyes away, his whole body seeming to burn with pain and Quirrell's laughter echoing in his head.

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Suddenly the pain began to fade and Harry looked up. Professor Dumbledore was standing between Hermione and Quirrell and his face was a picture of pure anger.

Flashes of light of different colours came from their wands as the two Professors battled.

“You can't protect all three of them at once,” Quirrell jeered, sending a spell towards Harry. Harry moved just quickly enough for it to miss, then Quirrell shot a spell at Mrs. Granger.

Something snapped inside Harry and, remembering what had happened in front of the mirror, he flew at Quirrell with his bare hands.

As his hands touched Quirrell's face, it began to smoke and he screamed in agony. He tried to Apparate away, but Dumbledore had cast a spell to prevent him. With a final long scream, Quirrell seemed to burn up and crumble into ash; leaving nothing but a tattered, sooty cloak on the ground, over the pile of ash. There was nothing else left of the binary horror that had killed Hermione's father and tortured Hermione and her mother.

Backing away from the remnants of the professor, Harry looked at his hands. There was no sign of burning. A series of cracks announced the arrival of Professors McGonagall, Flitwick and Sprout as well as Madam Pomfrey.

“We came as quickly as we could, when we heard the wards had...” Professor McGonagall's voice faded to nothing as she saw Hermione crouched over her mother.

Ignoring the new arrivals, Harry checked to see Hermione and then ran to Mr. Granger. He was joined by Professor Dumbledore. One look at the lifeless eyes of the man Harry had come to call “Dad” told them all they needed to know.

Professors McGonagall, Flitwick and Sprout had not moved from where they had arrived, wands out, ready for another attack if it came.

Harry and Professor Dumbledore crossed the garden to the two female Grangers, being tended to by Madam Pomfrey, who looked up with sadness in her eyes. "Cruciatius. Hermione will be okay."

"I am okay, Professor," Hermione confirmed. "Madam Pomfrey, how's Mum?"

Madam Pomfrey sighed. "I don't know. Muggles have no magical defences. I'll have to take her to St. Mungo's right away."

"And my Dad?" Hermione asked, her voice hard. "He's dead, isn't he?"

Professor Dumbledore nodded.

"It was the killing curse," said Harry, bitterly. "Green. Like when he killed my mother."

Madam Pomfrey insisted on checking Mr. Granger for herself before turning to Hermione and saying, "I'm very sorry. Now I must take your mother to St. Mungo's."

"I'm coming too," Hermione said firmly. She looked across to Harry, who just froze for a moment, then turned and walked into the house.

As the others left, Professor Dumbledore followed Harry into the house. "It isn't your fault, Harry."

"If I hadn't been with her..."

"Harry, this isn't worthy of you. You should be with Hermione."

"I can't face her."

"Harry," the Professor said in an unusually harsh tone of voice. "Hermione has just lost her father. She might still lose her mother. Don't you dare let her feel as though she has lost her husband at the

same time. She is your wife and right now she's hurting. Whatever you think, right now she needs you."

Harry didn't reply. There was a part of him that was completely numb. He and Hermione had just become more alike than Harry could have imagined... it was too much to take in.

"Shall I take you?"

Harry nodded, unable to find any words.

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When they arrived, as soon as the receptionist saw Professor Dumbledore, she had someone escort them up to the Long Term Spell Damage ward.

Hermione was sat in a chair at the foot of the bed as the mediwitches tended her mother. One of them tried to give Hermione a potion, but she waved it away.

"What's the potion for?" Harry asked.

"To ease the pain from the curse," the mediwitch replied. "But she won't let us give her anything."

Harry took the potion from the mediwitch, eased himself into her chair, passed an arm around her back and offered the potion to Hermione. "Please," he said.

Hermione looked up at him, her eyes red.

"Please take it," he repeated.

To his relief, Hermione took the potion and drank it down in one gulp, grimacing at the taste.

For the first time, she noticed the name on the bed beside her mother's. "Longbottom," she said. "Is she any relation to Neville?"

"His mother," said Madam Pomfrey.

"I never knew."

"He doesn't talk about it."

"What's wrong with her?"

Madam Pomfrey closed her eyes for a moment. "Both Neville's parents were tortured with Cruciatus until their minds went. They've been like this ever since."

"How long?"

"More than ten years."

"And my mother?"

Madam Pomfrey hesitated.

"Tell me. Will she be like them?"

"We don't know. We think the Longbottoms were subjected to the curse for almost half an hour. For your mother it could only have been a short time, as we arrived as soon as we knew the wards had been penetrated..."

"But she's a Muggle," said Hermione, heavily. "You said she had no magical defences."

"That's why we don't know," Madam Pomfrey admitted. "But they will do everything they can, I promise you."

"Professor," Hermione said, turning to Professor McGonagall. "What is happening to my father?"

"At the moment his body is being guarded, until you decide what you want to do."

"There'll have to be a funeral, of course, and I'll have to let my relatives know, and I think I have to register the death or something like that, and..."

"Hermione," said Madam Pomfrey. "Right now, his body will be kept safe. I'm sure Miss Collier will be able to help you. You don't have to do everything right now."

Hermione nodded, then turned back to the Professor. "I want to know why."

"I would guess that Voldemort, having possessed Professor Quirrell, decided to get revenge for what happened with the stone."

"That's not good enough, Headmaster," Hermione replied, her voice like ice. "I want to know why Voldemort is obsessed with Harry, and I want to know now."

"The only people I told were Harry's parents and the Longbottoms. You see why I can't tell you."

"Professor," said Harry. "I want to know. Voldemort wants to kill me anyway. At least we should know why."

"Tell us exactly what you think he can do to us, that he hasn't already done," snapped Hermione. "He killed my father, as good as killed my mother, tried to kill us. I want to know why. I need to know why."

Unnoticed by any of them, Professor Sprout had entered the ward. "Albus, if you know anything, they deserve to know."

"Walls have ears," Professor Dumbledore replied. "Now isn't the time or the place."

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The next few days Mrs. Weasley insisted on them staying at the Burrow as much as possible, but quite a bit of the time was taken up with Miss Collier, making funeral arrangements for David Granger.

The funeral took place on a cold rainy day, just before the new year. Hermione spent the whole time clinging to Harry's hand as if her life depended on it. If any of her father's professional friends who had attended wondered who some of the more strangely dressed guests were, they were too discreet to ask.

"Do let us know if there's anything we can do," they all said, one after another. Neither Hermione nor Harry noticed a photographer taking their photograph.

Miss Collier had barely left their side the whole time. When it was finally all over, Hermione turned to her and said simply, "Thank you. For everything."

Risking offending Mrs. Weasley, Hermione had asked if it was okay if they returned to Hogwarts after the funeral. She didn't like to say so, but the always busy and bustling Burrow household was too much for her right now.

So it was that Professor Sprout and Madam Pomfrey were waiting for them when the guests had finally all gone. They Apparated to Hermione's now sealed home, then Flooed to Hogwarts.

After a short rest, insisted upon by Madam Pomfrey, Hermione got up and found Harry in the common room.

"Now?" he asked.

"Now," she replied.

Dinner was just finishing and the few staff and students who were staying for the new year were getting up from the one big table that had replaced the normal house tables.

Hermione walked up to Professor Dumbledore and said, "Headmaster. It's time."

There wasn't a teacher at the table who didn't know what Hermione meant and Professor McGonagall turned to the headmaster and said, "Albus?" with a tone of clear expectancy in her voice.

"Come to my office. I need to show you something."

On reaching the office, Albus showed them a giant bowl filled with a silvery liquid. "This is a pensieve. It is full of memories. There is one you need to see. Just touch the surface, it won't hurt you."

As they touched the silver liquid, it seemed to both of them that they were catapulted into a dark room. A slightly younger Professor Dumbledore was sitting at a chair, while a woman they recognised as a teacher at Hogwarts began to speak in harsh, hoarse tones.

"THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES....BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRICE DEFIED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES...AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWS NOT...AND EITHER MUST DIE AT THE HAND OF THE OTHER FOR NEITHER CAN LIVE WHILE THE OTHER SURVIVES....THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD WILL BE BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES..."

Hermione was first to speak. "It means Harry, doesn't it?"

"Yes. It does."

"But Divination is just rubbish. Surely nobody believes it nowadays."

"While your opinion on Divination is shared by many, including myself, Mrs Potter, this was a true Prophecy. True Prophecies are rare and serious enough to have their own brand of researchers on the Ministry of Magic. I believed it and hired the woman just for the off chance of hearing any new ones. Voldemort believed it, and although he only heard the first two lines, when he attacked Harry that night, he fulfilled the next line. He marked Harry as his equal. Until then, the prophecy could have referred to two boys, Harry, or your friend Mr. Longbottom. But by leaving you that scar, he marked you forever as



the child of the Prophecy. Of course, if he had heard that line he would never have attacked you like that.”

“What is the power the Dark Lord knows not?” Harry asked. “I don’t have any special powers.”

“Anyone who saw the hole you left where the Slytherin door used to be might disagree.”

“Our shield? But that didn’t stop him. We tried. He just laughed and it disappeared.”

“What were your thoughts when you tried to use it?”

“I was angry. I wanted it to blast him away,” Harry admitted, “like it did that troll.”

“Your shield will never destroy Voldemort, and despite the troll, you can never use it as an offensive weapon.”

“But why did it work against the troll?” Harry argued.

“Hermione, what were your thoughts when you used it against the troll?”

“I was scared. I just wanted to protect all of us,” she replied quietly, with a slight shiver at the memory.

“Precisely. Your shield is unique. It comes from your bond. It comes from the love you share. Used to protect it is very powerful, as you have seen. But it can never be used to destroy. None of the power you get from the bond can ever be used, except in love.”

“So it was my fault it didn’t work?” asked Harry heavily.

“No. Even used correctly, your shield would not have been strong enough to defeat Voldemort. The strongest wards the Aurors and I could make did not defeat him. There was nothing you could have done.”

“How can I ever defeat him then, if even your spells couldn't?”

“That is what we have to find out. But I believe I do know the power he knows not.”

“What is it?” asked Hermione.

“You,” the professor replied with the nearest thing they had seen to a smile. “You, your Muggle background which he doesn't understand, nor value, and the love you have together.”

“It doesn't sound very much,” said Hermione.

“No? I suspect that it will be more than enough to defeat him, in time. But that's in the future. What are your plans now?”

“May we stay at Hogwarts until term starts?”

“Of course. And I know the reason you gave to Mrs. Weasley. Might I know your true reason for asking?”

“Voldemort can attack us wherever we are. No wards are going to be enough to keep anyone safe, if we live with them, are they?”

The professor didn't answer.

“We have to go to the only place Harry can be safe, and this time I will be with him.”

The professor nodded. Harry just looked puzzled.

“Harry, we have to go back to the Dursleys.”

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Author's note...

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena, The\_Scribbler and Minara.

Please review.

Brian

## Chapter Thirty-nine.

By Brian Grove

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Disclaimer:-

Still not mine, sniff, sniff.

(N) = See explanatory note below.

In the previous chapter...

Harry killed Quirrell, but Mr. Granger is dead and Mrs. Granger in St. Mungo's, possibly forever. Dumbledore told Harry and Hermione of the prophecy and Hermione said that they should go to live at the Dursleys....

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From Chapter Thirty-Eight...

"We have to go to the only place Harry can be safe, and this time I will be with him."

The professor nodded. Harry just looked puzzled.

"Harry, we have to go back to the Dursleys."

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Vernon Dursley was happy. Or at least Vernon Dursley was as happy as it was possible for Vernon Dursley to be, he wasn't exactly known around the company as a ray of sunshine.

After an enjoyable breakfast of Frosties followed by bacon, fried eggs, baked beans, tomatoes, fried bread, mushrooms and toast he had

yelled at the paper-boy for being late, almost ripping it from his hands sending the terrified boy running.

For once the traffic lights had been working properly which meant that he had arrived at work with fifteen minutes to spare. He liked arriving before his secretary so that he could shout at her for not working as hard as he did.

He was a good boss, he thought, paying his secretary well over the going rate. She had left school at seventeen, just before her A-levels(N) to care for her two small nephews (or was it nieces?) who would have gone into care when her older sister and her husband died. One of them had something wrong with it and the money he paid her helped for nursing care far beyond what the National Health Service would pay for. He knew what it was like to have some brat dumped on you, so he paid her enough that she could keep what had been her sister's house. Of course, if he expected her to be nice to him in return that was only fair.

To really make his day, she had arrived late (one of the brats had been ill again), giving him the excuse to reduce her to tears with threats of dismissal, then consoled her by having her sit on his lap while he had her take dictation. As usual she had said nothing as his hands wandered.

The early start meant that he had finished his work early so, until the canteen opened, he had gone out for a quarter-pounder with a large portion of chips to keep him going until lunch. Why that silly restaurant insisted on calling them fries, he would never understand. But what could you expect from Americans?

When he returned from his morning break his secretary had been suitably grateful for keeping the only job that paid enough to allow her to keep the brats and the house.

The canteen had his favourite for lunch, beef stew with dumplings, potatoes and vegetables. For afters, he had opted for a double helping of syrup pudding with custard.

He headed the department meeting in the afternoon, with his secretary taking notes. Of course, she had worn the short skirt he had insisted that she buy. He liked to show her off to the shits that worked under him, to rub their noses into it.

They were a bunch of incompetents of course. Today a sales representative made a serious mistake, (he had reported below-quota sales for the second week in a row) so he had been able to enjoy the task of firing him in the meeting, after reducing him to a quivering wreck first, of course, the perfect end to Vernon's year. He hadn't liked the man, he was ambitious and had too many good ideas for Vernon to take them all as his own, but nowadays you had to find some sort of excuse for firing someone.

He had felt so good after the meeting that he had locked himself in his office with his secretary for the next hour, then informed her that she'd be required for a business trip that weekend.

He had left early enough to miss the worst of the traffic and arrive home early. Perhaps he would take Petunia out to a restaurant tonight for New Year's Eve.

When he opened his front door and walked into his lounge, his mood changed drastically. "You!" he cried loudly. Then he turned to where Petunia was sitting and roared, "What's that FREAK doing in my house?"

He was startled to find a small girl with long bushy brown hair standing in front of him, with a stick pointed at him.

He was about to hit her, when Petunia screamed, "Vernon! Don't! That's a wand. She could kill us."

The girl in front of him smiled, but the smile didn't reach her eyes. "Mr. Dursley," she asked in her best sweet little girl voice. "How old is Dudley?"

"Eleven. Why?" he asked, angrily.

"Well," she replied in a voice which could have frozen steam, "if you want to live to see his twelfth birthday, you will never use that word again."

The girl's eyes were as hard as her voice and he looked across to Petunia.

Petunia was looking across to where an old man was sitting. How hadn't he noticed that old freak before? And where was Dudley? "What have they done with Dudley?" he asked, angrily.

Petunia explained. "I didn't want Dudders around these... people, so I sent him to his room."

Hermione added, "And as soon as he saw my wand after he said something about Harry, he was suddenly eager to go."

"This FREAK threatened our Dudders?" he looked nervously at Hermione, who said nothing, but raised her wand.

"Professor!" Petunia almost screamed. "They aren't allowed to use magic out of school. Stop her."

"Oh, don't worry about me," the old freak replied. "Just pretend I'm not here. I'm sure if you sit down, Hermione will explain."

Hermione stood aside to allow him to sit beside his wife. She turned to Petunia and said, "We may use magic, as legally we are adults."

"That's preposterous!" Vernon spluttered.

"Perhaps, none the less, it is correct," Professor Dumbledore confirmed. "When Hermione here, rescued Harry from your abuse, a magical bond occurred, which is very rare and usually only happens amongst adults. This bond makes them be married under our laws, which in turn concedes them an adult status."

"Ridiculous!"

"Maybe, but that's how it is. Hermione is quite correct in that she and Harry can legally use magic. They will be able to protect themselves when they come back here."

"But he hates us," Petunia protested, looking at the glowering Harry. "We can't have him here, he'd kill us all."

"Sadly, the law would not allow that, he would be arrested and tried before a wizarding court, although, I must admit, given your attitude to the wizarding world and your past treatment of Harry, it might be difficult to find anyone that would convict him, or Hermione as she will be coming with him."

"What do you mean?" Vernon asked. "Have her here? I don't want any fr..." He looked at Hermione who was smiling in a way he didn't like... "any of your lot here."

"We have to come here for Harry's safety," Hermione explained.

"Why should we care about... HIM?" Vernon sneered.

"Because if he dies, you will die too," Hermione replied, coldly.

"Is that a threat?" Petunia asked, petulantly.

"Not at all," the professor interrupted. "Perhaps I can explain. We have bigots just like you in our world too, those who think that you Muggles, people without magic, are little better than animals. They don't believe you should have rights and should become our slaves."

Harry could see his uncle fuming.

"One wizard, Voldemort, Petunia will have heard of him, decided that he would rule Britain and allow only pure-blood wizards any rights. He and his followers frequently used to torture and kill Muggles for fun. Harry's parents were part of a group that fought against him. To put it another way, they were killed for your freedom."

Petunia moved uncomfortably on the sofa as the professor continued.



“Voldemort killed them and tried to kill Harry, but Lily had sacrificed herself to save him, so the spell rebounded and defeated him. He wasn't seen again until this year. The magic Lily invoked that night is old blood magic, so while Harry lives at least some of the time with you, he is protected from Voldemort, who still wants to kill him.”

“If this Vol...”

“Voldemort.”

“If this Voldemort wants to kill the boy, why should I care? One less fr...” Vernon noticed Hermione's hand had gone back to her wand.

“I think wizard was the word you were looking for,” suggested Professor Dumbledore, helpfully.

Harry had been trying desperately not to laugh at Vernon's obvious fear of a twelve-year-old girl and finally gave up the struggle. Everyone turned to look at him.

Even Professor Dumbledore seemed amused, but managed to keep a straight face as he continued. “To put it in words you will understand, the blood protection doesn't just protect Harry. It protects his family, for want of a better word, meaning you.”

“Why should your maniac be interested in us?”

“You're Harry's family. You'd be target number one.”

“We'd just explain we have nothing to do with him...” began Petunia.

“That would be worth seeing,” said the professor, affably. “A pair of Muggles, and Voldemort hates Muggles with a vengeance, trying to explain to the aforesaid wizard, Voldemort, that they aren't really family to Harry Potter because they hate wizards.”

“May I watch?” asked Hermione, innocently.

“Now, now. Let's not get nasty,” said the professor. “It wouldn't happen anyway. Voldemort wouldn't allow you to say anything. He

would just kill you, unless he wanted to torture you first. You see, to him, YOU are the freaks.”

Vernon paled.

“If we take him in,” asked Petunia, “are you sure that it will protect us too?”

“Yes. It will, if you willingly take him in.” Dumbledore emphasised the word ‘willingly’, trying to convey the not-so-subtle message that they had to acquiesce for a reason other than brute force. He reflected, for a moment, that not all Muggles were created alike and that it was a shame that someone as genuinely decent and caring as Hermione’s father, would be sacrificed to Riddle’s wanton blood lust.

“We’ll take him,” she said quickly, before Vernon could argue.

“Very well. Harry and Hermione will stay for a short while now, so I can recast the wards, then they will return to you at the end of summer term.”

“Both of them? I didn’t say anything about...”

“Both of them.”

“But there’s no spare bedrooms.”

“They can share a room. They are, after all, married.” At Petunia’s shocked look, he added, “But as they are so young, I will, of course, conjure another bed.”

At this point Vernon looked like he was about to be sick, but he got up and said, “I’m going down the pub.”

Nobody stopped him leaving.

He drove away and only stopped until he hit that ruddy pub on the far side of Little Whinging. Different area, so people didn’t look at him funny. Damn social worker... and damned headmaster, not defending a fellow from Smeltings...

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Having watched Vernon go and firming up against her wish to follow him, Petunia gripped the arms of her chair and faced the old man who seemed to disrupt their lives whenever he wanted to.

“Headmaster,” she asked. “What makes Harry so special? I mean why does Volmedorg want to go after him anyway? And why bring him here now?”

Professor Dumbledore smiled. “Harry, if you remember where it is, do you think you could take Hermione and your things upstairs and show her your room?” he turned to Petunia and explained, “They've heard all this before.”

“Yeah, okay,” Petunia replied. “You know where it is.”

Harry nodded politely and then turned to leave. Hermione made eye-contact with the Headmaster, as if conveying to him that she expected him to say something, and then followed Harry out of the room.

The professor began to explain, “Before he was born, the wizarding world was at war. Voldemort was almost killing people at will. He was gaining supporters quickly while he was killing ours off. Then there was a prophecy, that someone born at the end of July would be the one with the power to kill him. James and Lily went into hiding, protected by the most powerful wards and charms we know. Voldemort killed them anyway, but as I said earlier, he was stopped by the magic Lily had created by sacrificing herself for him. Lily had achieved what I could not, she had stopped Voldemort.

“That protection lives in her blood, in your blood, or we would not be here. At Hogwarts this year Voldemort returned, having taken possession of a teacher. Harry defeated him. Then Voldemort, knowing that if Hermione was killed, Harry, as her bond-mate, would also die, came after Hermione. Her parents are Muggles, so I cast the majority of the wards myself. Once again he overcame the best

protection I, and the best ward-casters I could find, were able to provide. He killed her father and her mother is lying unconscious in hospital and likely to remain that way indefinitely. Then, once again, Harry defeated him.”

There was a knock on the door. As Petunia got up, Professor Dumbledore said, “That'll probably be for me. I will be here most of the night with some other ward-casters to set up the blood protection here.”

But before he could answer the door, Harry and Hermione had run downstairs and answered it. It was Bill and Remus and a tall dark man they didn't know.

“Mrs. Dursley, may I introduce Bill Weasley, who works in the curse-breaking department at Gringotts; Remus Lupin, one of Lily and James' best friends and Kingsley Shacklebolt, one of our top Aurors. Remus will be taking Harry and Hermione out to eat, while Bill and Kingsley assist me in casting the protections. Remus, do you have the emergency Portkeys?”

He nodded, pulled two spanners out of his pocket and tapped them with his wand, saying “activate”, then handed them to Harry and Hermione. “All you have to do is squeeze them and say “Home” and they will bring you back here. Let's go. Now, where do you want to eat?”

Harry turned to Petunia and asked, “Aunt Petunia, is there a McDonald's here?”

She gave him directions and they set off.

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Hermione was unusually quiet that night. They hadn't stayed very long at McDonald's as it was closing early for New Year's Eve. She hardly said a word after they came back from dinner and decided to go to bed early. To their surprise, as they had begun to walk up the

stairs, Petunia had called out, "Hermeeny! I... I just want to say I'm sorry about your parents."

Hermione had said a broken "Thank you," and they had continued upstairs. They had put the light out and both lay awake. Then Harry heard her crying quietly.

"Hermione? Are you all right?"

"I'm never going to see him again, am I?"

Not knowing how to answer that, Harry got out of his bed and slipped in beside Hermione.

"While we were at the Burrow, it wasn't real. Now we're here, and we're never going home. I'm never going to see either of them again."

"I'll take you to see Mum," Harry promised her.

"It's not the same. It's like she's not there."

Harry sighed, at a loss for an answer, so he just hugged her until she cried herself to sleep while he lay awake thinking. It had only been a day and a half since Hermione had dropped the bombshell about returning to the Dursleys.

He was ashamed of his reaction. He had exploded at her, accusing her of wanting to abandon him and would have stormed out of the room except that Professor Dumbledore had done something so that he couldn't open the door. Then Hermione had told him through her tears, "I'm coming with you. I'd never send you alone."

They had cried together then, Harry apologising for doubting her, Hermione saying it didn't matter, though Harry knew that it mattered a lot.

Then, suddenly, as if their row hadn't happened, Hermione turned to Professor Dumbledore and asked, "Are the wards there still active?"

"No. They will need to be re-cast. I'm afraid you will have to stay there for a week to charge them, which will make you a few days late for the start of term, but I'm sure you can catch up. Actually it's only Harry that needs to charge them..."

"He's not going there alone," Hermione had snapped.

Dumbledore had smiled. "I never thought for a moment that you would let him. The wards will not be at full strength until you have been there for a month or so in the summer. May I ask why this sudden change of mind, Mrs. Potter?"

"While I was at the Burrow, I asked Bill if there had been anything wrong with the wards, as Voldemort got through them so easily. I know you wanted us to be at the Dursleys and I wondered... I'm sorry. I had to know."

Professor Dumbledore had nodded. "Of course you did. In your position, so would I."

"Well he said that wards on houses are never as strong if the caster doesn't live there, but they were the strongest he'd seen outside of Gringotts and Hogwarts, as strong as the Ministry itself. He said that Voldemort could probably break in there if he wanted to. That he was so strong that only the thought of fighting you directly ever scared him. I'm sorry for doubting you, Sir."

"Mrs. Potter, Hermione. It is to my lasting regret that the wards I cast were not enough."

"You did warn us they might not be."

"I find no satisfaction in my fears being proved correct," the professor said sadly.

"I just couldn't bear being the cause of some other family dying," Hermione said frankly. Then she had turned to Harry and said, "Anyway, we're adults now. We can use magic. If the Dursleys try anything..." she pulled out her wand and mimicked casting a spell... "I'm sure the Weasley twins know some good hexes."

Although Hermione hadn't originally intended to, they returned to the Burrow that night and Hermione spent the rest of their time there taking notes from the Weasley twins on hexes and other useful spells. To her surprise this met with no objection from Molly. Molly also taught her some housekeeping spells.

"Hermione. I wish you would both stay here," she had said. "It's alright; I'm not going to argue with your decision. I know your reasons and I know that Professor Dumbledore agrees with you. But if those Dursleys do a thing to either of you, send Hedwig to us and we'll be there to make them regret it."

"Thank you, Mrs. Weasley."

The next morning, their breakfast at the Burrow, was spoiled by the arrival of the Sunday Prophet. It had a large photo on the front page of a distraught-looking Harry with Hermione clinging to him.

"BOY WHO LIVED LOSES ANOTHER SET OF PARENTS" was the headline. He quickly read down the short article and threw it back on the table in anger. "They don't even mention you, Hermione. It's like you don't matter at all."

"To them, I don't, Harry. Perhaps you'd have been better bonding with a pure-blood witch."

"I don't want anyone but you," Harry had declared offhandedly, still concentrated on his anger, but Hermione knew how deeply he meant it, because she could feel his love for her through his magic. It was almost palpable.

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Author's note...

Credit for the outline of the whole Vernon's day at work scene belongs to Nachoman, although I actually wrote it.

I know in canon the Dursleys don't know about the restriction on under-age wizardry, but that doesn't add up. Petunia would have known that as she grew up with Lily who did sometimes perform magic out of school and, according to JKR, received a number of letters about it. Even without the letters, Petunia would have been aware that Lily wasn't allowed to use magic out of school.

I've made a very minor correction to chapter 37 and re-uploaded it.

(N) Similar to the wizarding world's NEWTS, A-level is short for Advanced Level and are further-education qualifications in specific subjects. They usually last for two years. All universities treat A-level exam results as essential university pre-requisites, although some universities and colleges require their own additional entrance examinations and/or interviews. Students normally study three A-level subjects, although they may expand their schedules with one or two additional subjects which, whilst not nationally examined, may reflect favourably on their academic records. As stated in Grades or Marks, universities will demand specific marks for access to specific courses. A university may ask, say, for "two B's and a C" for one course, but "an A and two B's" for another, more popular course. Life can be tough for the student who wants to get into a particular course at a particular university or college.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena, The\_Scribbler and Minara.

Please review.

Brian



## Chapter Forty.

By Brian Grove

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Disclaimer:-

Still not mine, sniff, sniff.

In the previous chapter...

Harry and Hermione returned to live at the Dursleys....

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Harry awoke to find Hermione holding him. She was still asleep and Harry, not usually the most observant of people, could not help seeing how peaceful she looked in her sleep compared to how upset she was at the moment when she was awake. Not wanting to disturb her, he edged his way out of her bed managing not to wake her, then crept downstairs to prepare breakfast.

To his surprise, his Aunt Petunia was there. "You're not allowed to cook," she said, as she saw him picking up tools to help with preparing the food. "That girl said so, remember?" It took a moment, but the memory of that particular conversation was clear enough, once she mentioned it.

Before his Uncle Vernon had arrived home, Hermione had said that they wanted to stay here, but Harry wasn't to work, but she would pay for their room and they'd feed themselves. His Aunt hadn't had a chance to agree before Vernon had arrived.

Harry couldn't help a smile at the memory of his Uncle Vernon being held at wand-point by Hermione.

Hearing shouting from upstairs, Harry raced up to find Dudley blocking Hermione's exit from the bathroom.

“Leave her alone, Dudley.”

“Why should I? She got me sent away.”

Harry pulled out his wand. “This is why. Want to see what I can turn you into?”

Dudley backed off a little. “What are you two freaks still doing here anyway?”

“We live here now, until we go back to school.”

“Her parents chuck you out?”

Hermione’s eyes went wide, then she gave a sob, pushed past Dudley and ran into their room.

“What's up with her?”

“Her dad was killed last week and her mum's in hospital, bad.”

Dudley actually looked abashed. “I... I didn't know.”

Harry nodded in acknowledgement and left Dudley standing there looking stunned.

“Hermione? Are you all right?”

She nodded. “I said horrible things to him.”

“Who? Dudley?”

Hermione pulled a face. “No. Dad.”

Harry remembered the conversation the day before Christmas Eve. They had been invited to the Weasleys. Ginny had been telling them that she was worried about her friend Luna, who lived in the same village and was being bullied.

George smirked and replied, "Perhaps we should set Hermione on them. She can blast them apart like the troll."

Instead of the laughter he'd been expecting, Hermione and Harry had looked stunned and stayed silent.

The silence was broken by "Troll? What's a troll? Hermione?"

"It's a bit like a man, only bigger and stupid. It's not really dangerous or anything."

Mr. Granger's eyes narrowed. "So my daughter kills something big and stupid for no reason? Is that the way we brought you up?"

"She had to," Harry blurted out. "It knocked me out and would have killed us."

"Your first week at school and you fought some monster?" cried Mrs. Granger. "Was that when you ended up in hospital, Hermione?"

Hermione shook her head. "No, the troll wasn't until Halloween."

"So how did you end up in hospital? Or weren't you going to tell us?"

"I... er..."

"If you are going to get yourself in danger like that, perhaps you shouldn't go back."

This time it was Ron who almost shouted, "That wasn't her fault. Those bloody Slytherins had her trapped in bed and covered in sores, till Harry blasted his way in to rescue her."

There was a gasp from all the adults present. "And when were you going to tell us about that, Hermione? We've been waiting since you came home to give you the chance to say what happened."

"Sorry. But I was all right and they took me out of Slytherin."

"They do have a very good hospital wing," said Mr. Weasley, "Some injuries are not unusual in a magical school. Ron and the twins ended up in there for a short time as well."

"If you don't mind me asking, what were they doing for the three of them to end up in hospital?" asked Mrs. Granger.

"Playing chess," said Ron, miserably.

"Only we were being chess pieces and the other pieces knock you out if you are taken."

"And that's the kind of recreation they think is suitable for children in Hogwarts?" Mr. Granger fumed.

"It wasn't like that," Fred tried to explain. "We had to stop Snape."

"Only it wasn't Snape, it was Quirrell," Harry corrected.

"At least you two weren't involved in that," said Mrs. Granger in a relieved tone of voice. At the guilty look on both Harry's and Hermione's faces, she asked, "Were you?"

Hermione nodded.

"Well you're obviously not going to tell us what happened unless we ask," Mr. Granger said icily, "So I want to know everything about it, Hermione."

So Hermione related everything which had happened on the night they stopped Quirrell. When she was questioned on how they knew about the stone, she had to tell them about Harry's encounter in the Forbidden Forest.

To her surprise, at the end of the tale, her father simply said, "Now I want to know exactly what happened to you while you were in Slytherin."

When she had finished, her father looked ready to explode, but his voice was steady. "So let me get this right. You get bullied in Slytherin

and even in class and even though teachers know about it, nobody does anything until you are hurt enough to need a hospital and even then it was Harry that rescued you. Then you go into Ravendoor and..."

"Ravenclaw."

"Huh?"

"It's Ravenclaw, Dad."

He sighed. "You go into Ravenclaw and they steal your clothes..."

"I got them back."

"Besides the point. Then, a few weeks later you and Harry nearly get killed by a troll. After that, you get taken into a forest where Harry nearly gets killed again. Then before the end of term, you take it on yourselves to stop a deranged teacher and after half your friends are injured, Harry, you only survive because for some reason the teacher burns himself when he tries to murder you. Have I summed it up fairly accurately?"

"Yes, Dad," both Hermione and Harry admitted.

"Then you won't be surprised that I have no intention of letting you return to Hogwarts."

"Dad! You can't!"

"I'm sure your mother agrees with me. I know you wanted to go there, but it's simply too dangerous."

Hermione looked to her mother expectantly.

"I'm sorry. I agree with your father."

The Weasleys had simply looked shocked, but none of them said anything.

"But you can't!" Hermione protested again. "Harry HAS to be there."

"Why?"

"For when Voldemort comes back again."

"That's a good reason to take you both far away, young lady," your mother had replied.

"Ask the Weasleys if they believe Voldemort will come back;" Hermione cried. "And if they think Harry needs to be there."

"With the greatest respect, it's not up to them," her father argued.

"Just ask them what they think."

Her father had turned to Arthur Weasley, who had become a good friend over the past few years.

The other father sighed heavily. "When Voldemort went away, a lot of us believed he would return and that The Boy Who Lived would have some role in defeating him permanently. It appears that we were right about the first part. Nobody knows yet about the second."

"So you see, Dad. We must stay at Hogwarts."

"I'm not putting you in danger, and I apologise for this," he said in an aside to Arthur, "for some superstition."

"Dumbledore believes it," said Fred, suddenly.

"And he knows something, but he's not telling," added George.

All the adults looked at the twins in surprise.

"I'm sorry, Hermione. Dumbledore or not. You are not returning to Hogwarts. You can look through the brochures for the other wizard schools which accepted you and choose another one."

Hermione snapped. "You don't understand!" she cried. "You're just Muggles!" She turned and grabbed some Floo powder, yelled, "The Grangers!" and flamed away.

Molly Weasley turned to the adult Grangers and said, "Regardless of what we believe, you must do what is best for them. She'll come around."

The next day, David Granger had Harry sent an owl to Professor Dumbledore to inform him that Hermione and Harry would not be returning to Hogwarts.

"Harry, if he insists, we have no legal right to take you away unless we adopt you. Would you like us to do that?"

Harry had simply replied, "I want to be with Hermione."

Hermione hadn't "come around" as Molly Weasley had predicted. All the next day she barely spoke to her parents and when she did say anything, it was just snapping at them in anger.

"Hermione," her mother had attempted, "we may be 'just Muggles', but we're still your parents."

She had turned to her mother and said, "Yes, but in the wizarding world we're legally adults now. You cannot stop us if we want to go back."

The atmosphere in the house had remained icy right up to Christmas day. "Hermione," Harry had begged. "Please don't be like this today. I know you're really angry..."

"Aren't you? Don't you want to go back?"

Harry hesitated, nervous of her reaction. "Not really, no."

That had taken the wind out of her sails rather.

Seeing the opportunity, Harry had gone on, "Please don't spoil today by hating them."

Shocked, Hermione had replied, "I don't hate them."

"It looks like it."

Hermione had tried her best to be her normal self until just before Christmas dinner, when Harry had said, "You should say you're sorry to them."

"I will. I promise. After dinner."

Then the attack had happened.

Harry knew they were both remembering the same things. Hermione turned again to him and said, "I never told them I was sorry. I never said I still loved them."

Harry had no idea what to say to comfort her as she wept. He knew how hurt their parents had been. What was worse was that he could actually feel her sadness... her guilt. He wanted to tell her it was all right, it didn't matter, but it did. It did to her and it had to their parents, so he just held her as she clung to him, crying, for what seemed like ages.

It was a long while before she got up to have a wash, obviously pushing aside her feelings just as Harry did himself. Then they went out to the shopping centre to have some lunch.

As they ate, Harry asked "How are we paying for this?"

"Professor Dumbledore gave me some Muggle money, don't you remember?"

"Not really," Harry admitted. Even before Vernon's blustering arrival, Harry had been too distracted by being back in the home he had hated and feared as a child to take much notice of what was being said around him.



“Well, he gave the Dursleys enough money for rent for the week, and we have to buy our own food. There's a launderette where we can wash our clothes.”

“I thought you could just make them clean with a spell?” Harry asked.

“You can, but it's not the same. They are still better if you wash them sometimes. That's what Mrs. Weasley says anyway.”

“Oh.”

Hermione looked at the prices on the menu and then into her purse. “I don't think Professor Dumbledore's been out in the Muggle world for a while. We're going to need more money.”

“How do we get that? I don't have any.”

“I do. I don't know why, but I have this huge pile of money in a vault in Gringotts. They said my parents left it to me, which is silly. We ought to go there tomorrow.”

“How? There isn't a Floo at the Dursleys any more.”

“I've been reading about it. There's a bus we can take...”

“A bus? To Gringotts?” Harry sounded incredulous.

“Not a Muggle bus. A wizarding bus. It's called the Knight Bus.”

“Where does it stop?”

“Anywhere you want. You just hold out your wand.”

Wanting to try it out, Harry began to get up.

Hermione put her hand on his arm. “Not today, silly. Gringotts won't be open on New Year's Day. At least I don't think so. We'll go tomorrow.”

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They stayed out most of the rest of the day, deciding to watch a film at the cinema, eating out again (this time Hermione refused to go to McDonald's insisting that they should eat "proper food") and not arriving home until gone eight o'clock.

Dudley opened the door and let them in, initially without saying anything. As they climbed the stairs, he called out, "Oi. Potter! How come you've got a girlfriend in your bedroom?"

Hermione stopped and looked down at him from where she stood on the stairs, her eyes flashing angrily. "I'm not his girlfriend. I'm his wife."

Dudley actually laughed at her joke, until he realised that nobody else was laughing, then he turned and ran into the lounge and Harry and Hermione could hear him saying "How can the freak be married?"

They couldn't quite make out the reply from Petunia, but then heard Dudley yelling, "If he's allowed a girl in his room, I want one," at which point both Harry and Hermione collapsed into laughter on their beds.

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"And I thought the number sixty-seven was bad," Hermione laughed as they got off the Knight Bus the following day.

Muggles had been unable to see the huge purple bus which had stopped moments after Harry had held out his wand.

Hermione had insisted that they catch a Muggle bus to a nearby town before calling the Knight Bus, so nobody would know where they were living. Harry hadn't thought of that, but thought it was a good idea even if the thought of Voldemort putting his uncle under the Cruciatus for a while brought a smile to his face.

When they entered Gringotts, Hermione asked to make a withdrawal and showed her key.

The goblin looked at Harry and his eyes flicked up to his scar. Harry brushed his hair back over it in annoyance.

“Mr. Potter. Your hand please, so I can make you a key.”

The goblin stuck a pin in his hand as he had done to Hermione a few years before. Again he went away with the bloodied paper and returned with a key, handing it to Harry.

“Let's go and see my vault first,” Harry said, excitedly. “I didn't even know I had one.”

“Nor did I when I came the first time.”

The ride was as terrifying as Hermione remembered. She almost thought she'd prefer being on a broom.

“But this is my vault!” she cried as the door swung open after the goblin had inserted Harry's key. “It's the one you brought me to when I first came here.”

Then it dawned on her. “You knew I was bonded. But it must have been Harry's parents who left all this gold, not mine.”

Harry was puzzled. Hermione knew it was his money she'd been spending, she'd figured it out once she found out that they were married. He was going to say something then realised that she still wasn't herself after what had happened.

The goblin had no such reticence. “Of course we knew,” the goblin snapped. “And if you are bonded, they were your parents too.” He spoke as if it were obvious and Hermione was just being immensely stupid.

When they left the bank, Harry wanted to stay in Diagon Alley for a while, but after the third person came up to him and said how sorry they were about his parents, virtually ignoring Hermione, who was

becoming tearful, Harry turned and said, "I've had enough of this. Let's go back."

The journey back to Little Whinging was uneventful and an anticlimax. Relations over the next week in number four Privet Drive were a little strained as they got used to the five of them living there together.

Dudley stayed out of their way as much as possible until he returned to Smeltings the following Sunday and Harry and Hermione either stayed in their room (especially when Vernon was home) or went out.

Finally, early in the morning on Wednesday the eighth of January, there was a knock on the front door and Petunia opened it. Harry and Hermione had been forbidden to answer the door in case it was "normal people" visiting them.

"It's for you," Petunia had called, hurrying Professor Dumbledore inside before the neighbours could see him.

"Harry, Hermione, looking well, I see. Everything all right?"

"Yes, Professor," Harry answered.

"Good. It's time to go back to Hogwarts." Turning to Hermione, he added, "All your teachers have left notes for you on what you need to catch up on. You haven't missed much, yet. Are you ready to go?"

"Yes," Hermione had replied. "We're ready."

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Author's note...

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena, The\_Scribbler and Minara.

Please review.

Brian

## Chapter Forty-one.

By Brian Grove

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Disclaimer:-

Still not mine, sniff, sniff.

In the previous chapter...

Harry and Hermione at the Dursleys over the New Year...

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Walking up from the gate, Hermione paused as Hogwarts castle came into view. Dumbledore carried on walking quickly, explaining that he had to prepare for a lesson, leaving Harry to ask, "What's wrong?"

"We wouldn't be here if Dad was alive," she replied, a tear beginning to roll down one cheek. "I wouldn't have gone against him."

"But you said..."

"I know what I said," she snapped, angrily. "But I wouldn't have. And now, it's like I'm betraying him..." Her voice failed her.

"We can go somewhere else if you like. We don't have to come here."

"We do, Harry," she said sadly. "I just know we do."

The rest of the walk up to the castle was made in silence.

Harry couldn't help think to the last time they had come here, although then they had Flooed from Hogsmeade. It had been after the funeral, the day he had learned of the prophecy.

After exploding at Hermione, thinking that she meant to abandon him at the Dursleys, she finally calmed him down, then he turned to Professor Dumbledore and protested, "But surely, Voldemort's dead. I killed him. I saw him die."

The professor shook his head sadly. "You saw Professor Quirrell's body die. Even though I'm sure that Voldemort had no idea of what you could do to Professor Quirrell, he would have left the moment I arrived if he hadn't had some way to be sure to stay alive."

"But how?"

"I wish I knew. I am researching into how he could have stayed alive all these years. But I'm certain that he will come back, just as he did after trying to kill you before."

"Can he ever be killed? Really killed?"

"Nobody can live forever, Harry, not even Voldemort."

"How DID I kill him?"

"It was the protection your mother gave you. It lives even in your skin. It was love. Someone as distorted as Voldemort could not stand it."

"If the protection works without me being at the Dursleys, why do we have to go?"

"The protection in your skin only works by touch. Voldemort, or any of his followers could kill you with a spell."

"Do the Weasleys know the prophecy?"

"No. Why?"

"They believe it has to be me, that kills him, I mean. Especially Fred and George. They said you were hiding something."

The Professor smiled. "Those two are more intelligent than they would have us believe. But you will find a lot of people already

believe Voldemort will return and it will be you that defeats him again."

"Why me?"

"That is something we may never know, Harry. We just have to live the life we were given."

The life we were given, Harry thought as they crossed the threshold into the entrance hall. Hermione had seen her father killed, her mother tortured into a coma and then been tortured herself. Surely the life she had been given would have been better without one Harry Potter in it.

They hadn't spoken as they had made their way to the Hufflepuff cellars. The moment they entered the common room the conversation died to silence. The circle of students sitting around the central fire all stood up, and the oldest one in the circle spoke up. "Erm... Hermione. We just want to say how sorry we were to hear about your parents. And the prophet was awful to you. If there's anything we can do..."

When Hermione burst into tears, she found herself hugged from all sides by the other Hufflepuff girls, while the boy who had spoken turned to Harry and said, "I didn't mean to upset her."

Harry turned to him and said, "It's okay. Thanks Cedric. Anything sets her off right now, but it means a lot to her."

Cedric nodded. "You take care of her, right?"

Harry nodded grimly.

At first, Harry was sure that Hermione would have preferred to have been left alone and he had been tempted to rescue her from the fray, but looking at her, now seated on a sofa between two of the girls as they all cried together, he wasn't so sure.

It was only half an hour to the Defence Against the Dark Arts class when Susan Bones said, "Hermione. Do you want to wash your face before class?"

"Which class is it? I can't remember where I put my timetable!" Hermione began to panic.

"It's here, in your bag," said Harry, "and it's Defence Against the Dark Arts."

He waited for Hermione to collapse into tears again, but she didn't.

"Who's taking it now?"

"Apparently Dumbledore's taking it himself for the rest of the year," Hannah Abbot said.

"And when he can't take it for some reason, Flitwick or McGonagall are going to fill in, whoever's free," Susan added.

The girls went into the bathroom and when they finally came out, you couldn't see that Hermione had been crying.

"Does my face look alright now?" Hermione asked Harry.

"Yeah, it's fine."

"Susan knows some brilliant spells," Hermione said. "She's going to teach them to me later."

"Great."

"And it'll be great having Professor Dumbledore to teach us... He must know so much..."

"Probably remembers Merlin himself," Ernie Macmillan piped up, only to receive a look of muted disgust from Hermione.

To the surprise of all in the class, Professor Dumbledore decided to stray from what Professor Quirrell had been teaching on various forms of blood-sucking creatures in Eastern Europe, and instead began to teach them the "Protego" shield charm, which, of course, Harry, Hermione and Ron already knew.



"I am going to make this an exception to the usual rule about no magic outside of class," he said. "I want you all to practise this as much as possible. Do not, however, aim it directly at someone close by."

The hour for the class passed quickly and afterwards quite a few of the Ravensclaws came up to Hermione to express their condolences. Harry decided to get her back to the Hufflepuff cellar as quickly as possible before she started crying again.

Lunch was interrupted by a visit from Malfoy. "Ah, well, two down. The Dark Lord will return and finish you all off. Pity he left the mudbl--"

His sentence came to an abrupt end as Harry's fist hit him in the mouth. His two goons, Crabbe and Goyle immediately grabbed Harry.

"You'll pay for that, Potter."

"Really? I just killed off your Dark Lord again. What makes you think I can't handle you?"

By this time, Professor McGonagall had arrived at the table. "What is going on here?"

"Nothing, Professor;" spat Malfoy. "We were just talking."

"Go back to your table, and Mr. Potter, I thought better of you than to get involved in a common brawl. That's ten points from each of you."

She walked away angrily.

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Malfoy was back at his table muttering, "Ten points when he was the one who attacked me. Wait till my father hears about this:"

“Your father,” retorted Professor Snape, who had made his way down to the Slytherin table, “got where he is by use of subtlety and a certain charm. He will not be pleased to know that you appear to lack both. I would strongly suggest that you do not inform him of this fact. You will do detention with me for the rest of this week.”

“You can't do that!”

“Mr. Malfoy. I not only can do that, I have done so. I will see you tonight.”

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As they left dinner that night, Neville spoke quietly to Hermione, “Er., I was sorry to hear about your parents.” He looked like he wanted to say more, but couldn't put it into words.

Hermione replied, “Thank you, Neville. I don't know how you've coped all these years with your parents like that.”

Neville just shrugged his shoulders and walked away sadly.

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Neither Harry nor Hermione felt like socialising much for a while and Harry couldn't help but notice that Hermione was growing increasingly quiet. All the other Hufflepuffs knew she was sad about her parents but had no idea how to help her. Even the teachers were worried as the standard of her essays were dropping. Even Professor Snape had seemed concerned, at any rate, he hadn't made any biting remarks to her since they had returned to school.

It was just over a week after they had returned from school, when Neville approached Harry again.

“Hi, Neville,” Harry said. “Sorry if we've been ignoring you, it's just...”

“I know. Can I have a word? Alone?”

"Yeah, er, okay. I'll meet you downstairs, Hermione," Harry replied and followed Neville.

Neville started by saying "Hermione's not looking good."

"I wonder why that is?" asked Harry, bitterly.

"Has she been to see her mother yet?"

"We went straight after it happened. Why?"

"No, I mean, has she visited her at all?"

"No," Harry replied, feeling confused. "What's the point? She's still unconscious, Madam Pomfrey told us."

"It might help her," Neville insisted.

"How can Hermione visiting possibly help Mum when she wouldn't even know she was there?"

"I mean Hermione. It might help Hermione."

Harry didn't look convinced.

"Talk about it with Madam Pomfrey," Neville suggested. "I know, when I was old enough to understand... my Gran insisted I went with her... and it just felt like it helped, you know?"

Harry hesitated. "I'll ask Madam Pomfrey."

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It was quite late, after Hermione had gone to bed, that Harry crept along to the hospital wing to see Madam Pomfrey.

She opened the door dressed in a nightdress and a thick towelling dressing gown. "Mr. Potter, Harry. Is something wrong? Are you hurt?"

"No, Madam Pomfrey..."

"You'd better come in before someone sees you. If you're not hurt, you've no business walking around Hogwarts at night."

Harry slipped inside the door.

"Now, tell me. What is it that brings you here when you should be in bed?"

"It's Hermione. She's not getting better."

Madam Pomfrey nodded. "I know, Harry. Some things take a long while to heal."

"Can't you do something? Cast a spell or something?"

"No, I'm afraid not," Madam Pomfrey replied sadly, shaking her head. "I could cast a cheering charm, but that would only help for a short time. You'll just have to give her time."

"It's just that Neville said..." Harry hesitated. "He said it might help her if she saw Mum."

"It's possible," Madam Pomfrey agreed. "Why don't I see if we can arrange that, then, if we can, I'll speak to Hermione myself. Agreed?"

Harry nodded.

"Now, I'd better take you back to Hufflepuff before you are missed."

"Thank you."

So they walked back to the Hufflepuff cellars together and Harry went to bed feeling a little happier than he had felt for a while.

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Author's note...

Thanks to Bella for spotting a number of spelling errors. Chapters 30, 34 and 35 have now been corrected and re-uploaded.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena, The\_Scribbler and Minara.

Please review.

Brian

“Mrs Weasley brings me whenever she can.”

"How is she?"

"Just the same I'm afraid," Miss Collier replied.

Hermione was now standing beside her mother's bed, looking down, uncertain what to do, biting her lip.

"She's still your mother," Miss Collier said gently.

At that Hermione broke down, then took her mother's hand. "Mum, I'm so sorry. If I hadn't been a witch... If we'd listened to Professor Dumbledore..."

"Let's have none of that," said a brisk voice.

Hermione turned around.

"Hello, dear, I'm the mediwitch in charge of this ward."

"How is my mother?" Hermione managed to ask.

"The same, I'm afraid. Hermione, isn't it?"

Hermione nodded.

"Why don't you sit down? I want to explain something to you."

Hermione did as the mediwitch said.

"There is no easy way to say this. Nobody in this ward is ever going to recover. The mother you knew isn't here any more."

Hermione noticed Miss Collier stiffen at this.

"I've tried to explain to your friend, there is a reason nobody visits this ward. We've found it's best if people move on with their lives."

"Mrs. Longbottom visits," Miss Collier protested.

"Yes," replied the mediwitch acidly, "and drags that poor boy here whenever she can. Can you imagine what's it's like for him, seeing his parents like this all his life? He'd have been better off forgetting they ever existed."

She turned back to Hermione. "We care for their bodies, but their minds are gone. I never knew your mother, but I'm sure she wouldn't want you to sit here, making yourself miserable. She'd want you to grow up and become the young woman you can be. I'm not saying forget her. But she's part of your past now, not your future."

By this time Hermione had tears running down her face. The mediwitch patted her on the should and said, "I really am sorry." Then she turned and left them alone.

"Hermione, I'm not a witch and this isn't really any of my business, but I've been talking with a friend who's a doctor."

At Professor Sprouts sharp look, she quickly added, "I didn't say anything I'm not supposed to, I just described Mrs. Granger's condition."

"And?" asked Hermione.

Professor Sprout looked displeased at the way Miss Collier had lit a spark of hope in Hermione when there could be none.

"There's been a lot of research into what they call irreversible comas. Some people have been brought out of them by listening to music, by being talked to by their loved ones, by being touched. It usually takes a long time and doesn't often work, but I thought..."

"I want to try."

"I tried to explain to the mediwitches, but they aren't interested in Muggle ideas. I brought a tape player but it didn't work."

"It wouldn't," said Professor Sprout. "There's too much magic here."

"Can it be charmed to work?" Hermione asked.



"I don't know. Probably. Let me go find a Floo and I'll ask Professor Flitwick."

When Professor Sprout had gone, Miss Collier explained, "Hermione. I don't know anything about crucius curses or anything, and I don't want to get your hopes up."

For once, Hermione didn't correct Miss Collier. Her face was firm, showing none of the sadness of a few minutes before except for the red lines left by her tears, as she replied, "I understand. But if there's the slightest chance, I have to try."

"That's what I thought you'd say."

By the time Professor Sprout returned, Hermione was sitting beside her mother, holding her hand and stroking her hair, while talking quietly to her.

Professor Flitwick had come with Professor Sprout and immediately asked Miss Collier what she wanted him to do.

After hearing the explanation from Miss Collier, he replied, "Yes, I'm sure I can do that. If Professor Sprout agrees, why don't you take Hermione with you? You can choose some favourite music, perhaps record Hermione's voice. When you've made some tapes, bring them to me with the thing that plays them and I'll charm it to work here."

He called the mediwitch and explained what they were going to do.

She frowned. "This is a Muggle treatment?"

He nodded.

"Then it isn't allowed without authorisation from the hospital's Chief Mediwizard, and he doesn't approve of Muggle treatments."

"That could be a problem," Professor Sprout admitted.

"Does this mean we can't do it?" Hermione asked anxiously.

“Hermione, you go with Miss Collier. Leave the hospital bigotry to me, okay?”

“Okay.”

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Hermione took an amazed Miss Collier to Gringotts and withdrew enough money to buy what they would need, then they took an ordinary London bus to one of London's many shopping areas. On the advice of a man in the queue at the bus stop, Hermione decided to avoid the better known areas which were more expensive.

Miss Collier laughed. “You have all that money and you want to save a few pounds?”

Hermione looked embarrassed. “I didn't mind spending it before, but now I know it's Harry's money, it doesn't feel right.”

“I thought it was now legally your money too?”

“I know,” Hermione admitted, “but it doesn't feel like it's mine. Am I being silly?”

“I can't answer that,” smiled Miss Collier. “I've never been soul-bonded or whatever you call it, so I can't say what's normal and what's not. Why doesn't it feel yours?”

Hermione looked down at the ground.

“Hermione? Is something wrong?”

“I... I'm not sure.”

“Is it about you and Harry?”

Hermione nodded.

"You seemed so close."

"We are." Hermione hesitated. "We were."

"What's wrong? I remember you were afraid he would lose interest in you..."

"It's not that," Hermione answered quickly. "He's been... He's been great since... since it happened."

Miss Collier looked at Hermione, concerned at the agony on her face. Knowing that Hermione needed time to get her thoughts in order, she said, "Let's go and get a tea or coffee or something and we can talk."

Hermione nodded.

After ordering a pot of tea for two in a local café, they sat down. Miss Collier waited patiently.

"It's me," Hermione admitted. "Harry's been so good, I mean, really. When I've wanted to cry, or just sit quietly..., he's just been there when I've needed him."

"I sense there's a 'but' coming."

"I've been awful to him. When I needed someone to cry on, I've used him."

"I'm sure he doesn't mind."

"He doesn't."

"So what's the problem?"

"Other times... I've just ignored him, pushed him away really."

At that point they were interrupted by a voice calling "Tea for table ten!" Miss Collier went and picked up the tray and brought it back to their table and began to pour out the tea.

"You were saying you're pushing Harry away. Why's that?"

"This is going to sound awful. I shouldn't even say it. I can't."

"You can't bottle it up inside. It'll make you ill"

Hermione took a breath. "It's just that when I see him, I don't want Harry, I want my Mum and Dad." Hermione broke down in tears.

"Hermione. When you were younger and you were upset, who did you go to?"

"Usually Dad."

"Why was that?"

Hermione smiled. "He could always cheer me up. If I was upset, often Mum got upset too."

"And who do you go to now?"

"Harry," Hermione answered instantly.

"And Harry isn't like your Dad, is he? I would guess he's more like your Mum."

Hermione nodded. "I can feel him getting upset when I am, and I know it's hard for him, so I try to hide it from him, but I can't for long."

"It's okay to miss your parents, Hermione. It's okay to wish it was your Dad comforting you instead of Harry. It doesn't mean you love Harry any less."

"It doesn't?"

"Of course not. No one person can give us everything we need. That only happens in romance stories."

Hermione almost laughed.

“Did I say something funny?”

“I don't think Harry's got a romantic bone in his body.”

“Why do you say that?”

“He doesn't see me like that. It's like we're brother and sister.”

“He's only eleven.”

“But I see him as more than that. Why can't he?”

“I'm sure he will, in time. Boys take a lot longer than girls. And you are very mature, even for a girl.”

“I suppose so. It's just... annoying.”

Miss Collier suddenly laughed. At Hermione's surprised look, she explained, “He's an eleven year old boy. He's supposed to be annoying, especially to girls.”

Hermione giggled.

“Now, shall we go spend all that money?”

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The two professors had met with a blank wall of refusal from the Chief Mediwizard and returned to Hogwarts by Floo and explained the situation to Professor Dumbledore.

“Do you think there's any chance of it working?” he asked Madam Pomfrey, having called her to his office and made the two professors explain Miss Collier's idea to her.

“I have no idea,” Madam Pomfrey admitted. “She's a Muggle. It's a Muggle therapy.”

"But a Cruciatus curse isn't exactly like a Muggle disease," Professor Dumbledore pointed out.

"But the effect is a long term coma," she replied. "So who knows what might help. We don't have a treatment, that's for sure, so why not try it?"

"I agree. That leaves me with the problem of the Chief Mediwizard. Madam Pomfrey, could you ask Harry to come to my office when Hermione returns. And could you come with him, please?"

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"Where are we going, Professor?" Harry asked.

"We are going to visit the Chief Mediwizard at St. Mungo's. Madam Pomfrey can explain Miss Collier's idea. We are taking Hermione as it is her mother we are talking about. And in case my influence isn't enough, we are taking you, Harry. I know you don't like to think about being The Boy Who Lived, but just this once, I think your status may help us."

Harry looked uncomfortable, but agreed and a few minutes later they were in the office of the Chief Mediwizard. His deputy was also there.

After listening to Madam Pomfrey's explanation, he replied, "I'm afraid I can't agree that a Muggle therapy can have any worth in treating a magical injury. We have had our best mediwizards working for years on a cure." He laughed. "You can't expect Muggles to find a cure which we haven't." He turned to Hermione, "I'm sorry dear. I know it must be hard for you."

"You won't even try?"

"Mrs. Potter. I have listened carefully to what you have had to say because I have respect for Professor Dumbledore, not to mention we all owe your husband so much."

"But you won't take any notice?" Hermione said, trying to stay calm.

"If I thought there was a chance it would do any good..."

Professor Dumbledore sighed and turned to go. "I'm sorry, Hermione. I really am."

As they walked out of the office, Harry was last. He had just turned down the corridor outside the door when he heard the Chief Mediwizard turn to his deputy and say, "Damned cheek. She's just a Muggle. If it wasn't for him we wouldn't even have her here."

Harry turned around and almost ran into the office again. "Just a Muggle? Just a Muggle?" he screamed, bringing the others running into the office after him.

The Chief Mediwizard looked embarrassed. "I didn't mean anything by it..."

"She is my mother, or as good as," Harry said angrily. He turned to Professor Dumbledore. "I don't care how much money you have to take from my vault, I want her out of here and in a Muggle hospital away from these... these quacks."

"How dare you?" spluttered the Chief Mediwizard.

Harry eyes flashed dangerously. "You know, you will expect me to save you from Voldemort when he returns. Just tell me one thing. Why should I save your world? Tell me that." He stormed from the room leaving the others standing. "I want her out of here!" he shouted as he ran down the corridor.

At the end of the corridor, he leaned against a wall and slid to the floor, his head between his knees, his body rocked with silent sobs.

Madam Pomfrey turned to Professor Dumbledore and Hermione. "I never thought I'd say this. But we're no better than Rita Skeeter."

At their puzzled look, she explained. "The prophet talked about Harry losing another set of parents and totally ignored you, Hermione."

Hermione looked ashen as Professor Dumbledore said, "And we've done the opposite. We've tried to make allowances for Hermione and forgotten Harry..."

"That, Professor," stated Madam Pomfrey, "is a little boy who's lost the only parents he can remember."

"I didn't even think," cried Hermione. She ran to where Harry was sitting and sat beside him, putting her arms around him. "Harry, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

After a few minutes, Professor Dumbledore and Madam Pomfrey helped the two children to their feet and walked with them to the Floo.

"I mean it," said Harry. "I want her away from those bastards."

Not even Hermione objected to his language.

"Hermione, she is your mother too," Professor Dumbledore stated. "Legally you are her next of kin. Do you agree with Harry?"

"Yes," she said quietly, all the fight having gone from her.

"I will see it done," the Professor promised.

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Author's note...

Sorry this has been so long, it has been difficult to write and I've also been very depressed.

Thanks to Bella and HarryismyHeroicsavior for spotting a number of spelling errors. Chapters 30, 34 and 35 have now been corrected and re-uploaded.

Thanks also to JJ Rust for spotting typos way back in chapter 11, 16, 18, 21 and 23, also now corrected and re-uploaded.



And thanks also Alix33 for spotting a typo in the previous chapter, now corrected and re-uploaded.

Black paws pointed out that I'd missed out them actually naming Hedwig. I've now added that scene to chapter 12 and re-uploaded it.

Thanks to Ookii Mamoru and EvilFaerie17 for pointing out that Hermione already knew it was Harry's money she was spending. I've made a slight change in the Gringotts scene in chapter 40 and re-uploaded that too.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena, The\_Scribbler and Minara.

Please review.

Brian

## Chapter Forty-three.

By Brian Grove

brian at rescueddoggies dot com

Author's note...

This chapter is unbeta'd at the time of posting. My apologies to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler. I've taken so long to write this chapter that I didn't want to make all my readers wait even longer to read it.

Disclaimer:-

Still not mine, sniff, sniff.

(N) = See explanatory note below.

In the previous chapter...

Harry and Hermione visit Mrs. Granger at St. Mungo's and after being refused the chance to try a Muggle treatment, Harry demands that she be moved to a Muggle hospital...

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Professor Dumbledore was as good as his word. The following Monday, he Flooed to the Ministry to speak to someone in the department that dealt with all wizard-Muggle liaisons and asked them to arrange for Mrs. Granger to be moved to a reputable Muggle hospital.

If his staff had hoped that the visit to St. Mungo's would have improved Hermione's state of mind, they were disappointed. Monday evening Professor Sprout met with Madam Pomfrey in the hospital wing.

"I don't know what to do with either of them," she despaired. "Hermione moping around was bad enough, but now they both are."

"Perhaps they just need time," Madam Pomfrey suggested.

"They are getting worse, not better. You heard what happened in the Hufflepuff common room last night?"

Madam Pomfrey shook her head.

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Harry and Hermione were also being talked about in a classroom. "Thank you for coming, Weasleys and Neville," Susan began.

"What's this all about?"

"You haven't heard what happened last night?"

"No. Why?"

"I'm surprised it hasn't got out. Well, you all know that Hermione has exactly been herself this term."

"It's hardly surprising. You can't blame her for that," Ron almost shouted.

"We're not here to blame her. We're here because we're worried about them," Susan snapped. "Now they're both ignoring everyone, barely making it to lessons. If they do have to talk to anyone, they just snap at them. The last two nights they've been sleeping on a sofa in the common room where they can be together."

"It's where they spend most of their time," Ernie added.

"From what we can see, they're hardly eating. And last night when one of the older boys accidentally woke them, Harry was so startled that he used his shield spell and nearly blasted him out of the room."

He's okay. He wasn't hurt much and he wouldn't go to Pomfrey as he didn't want to get Harry in trouble.”

“So you're trying to stop the Boy Who Lived becoming the Boy Who Exploded,” said Fred.

Ron looked at his older brother angrily. “It isn't funny.”

“It would be if you could get Snape to wake him,” said George.

For once, nobody laughed.

“Okay,” George admitted. “We have a problem. What can we do?”

“We don't know,” said Hannah Abbot miserably. “They won't talk to anyone. Hermione just doesn't answer and Harry snaps at everything.”

“They're just clinging to each other all the time and I don't even think they're helping each other that much,” said Susan.

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Harry was just coming out of the Great Hall after dinner the following day, when his arm was taken by Fred and he was pulled aside. “No common room to sulk. Come on, we're going flying.”

He looked behind him to see that George had taken Hermione's arm in the same way and the twins were virtually dragging them outside.

“Look, thanks, but no thanks. We're fine as we are,” Hermione was saying.

“We'd noticed,” George replied. “And of course you don't need to relax at all. That would be completely illogical.”

“We WERE going back to our common room to relax, until you two showed up,” Hermione argued.

“Right,” said Fred, “Relax. I'm sure that's in a dictionary somewhere. Sitting on a sofa scowling and looking like you'll hex anyone who dares to come near to you.”

“Leave her alone,” Harry said, raising his voice as he twisted out of Fred's grip. He and Hermione ran towards the Hufflepuff cellar only to find that Neville was standing in front of the portrait.

“You're banned from here for the evening,” he announced.

“Neville, get out of the way. I'm not joking.” Harry drew his wand to give force to his words.

“You... You'll have to make me,” Neville said nervously, still not drawing his wand, but eyeing Harry's wand as he spoke.

“We're not in the mood for this,” Hermione snapped.

“We know. You're in the mood for cutting yourself off from everyone again and being miserable,” Neville almost shouted.

“And why not?”

“Because it doesn't help.”

“Neville. Get out of the way,” Harry repeated.

“You were my first friends. My relatives all thought I was a squib. My grandmother just kept telling me I should be more like my father and how disappointed he'd be. And the Gryffindors didn't want me.”

“What's this got to do with us going back to the common room?” Hermione asked.

“I know how bad it is to be alone,” he explained.

“But we're not alone,” Hermione argued. “We've got each other.”

“No, you haven't, not really,” a girl's voice answered.

Harry and Hermione turned around to see that Susan had appeared from somewhere, along with Hannah, Ron and the Weasley twins.

"You're both just sitting there being miserable. You're not facing it together, you're just sitting together to keep the rest of your friends away."

"Maybe you don't have to do this all alone, mate," Ron said.

Harry held his wand steady until Hermione took his hand and lowered it. "What do you want us to do?" she asked quietly.

There was an audible sigh of relief from Neville.

"It's time you got out of this castle," Fred insisted.

"But it's almost curfew," Hermione protested, before her hand was taken by George.

"Come on. It'll do you good," George said encouragingly.

"Both of you," Fred added.

That made up Hermione's mind for her, and she went willingly with George. Harry and the others all followed.

They reached the broom storage cupboard and Fred handed Harry a broom. He offered one to Hermione, but she refused. "I don't really like flying."

When they reached the quidditch pitch George cast a spell which turned the lights on flooding the area with light.

"Someone's bound to see that," Hermione objected.

"It's all right," Fred insisted.

Harry didn't wait to hear Hermione continue to argue, he just took off. He flew higher and higher until he disappeared above the level of the lights and they could no longer see him.

"Hermione," said Fred, unusually quietly for him. "Sometimes, George and I, we can sense what each other are feeling. I know you two can."

"We haven't..." she admitted. "We haven't done that since... since Christmas."

"Then it's about time you did, my dear," came Professor Sprout's voice from behind her.

Hermione gasped.

"It's all right, Hermione. You're not in trouble. Fred and George very responsibly asked me for permission to do this."

Hermione turned to the twins. "Forgot to tell us that, didn't you?"

"More fun breaking the rules," Fred replied.

"Didn't want to ruin our reputation," George added.

"Hermione. Don't get distracted. Concentrate on Harry," the professor insisted.

"I can't even see him," she replied, but she slowly opened her mind to him. She could sense a terrible sense of guilt and anger for what had happened to her parents, almost completely masking a dull hollow ache which she knew only too well, the dreadful void left when they had been. But right at the moment, above all the sadness and anger, there was a feeling of exhilaration. She could feel the wind and the excitement.

Turning her face suddenly towards the far side of the quidditch pitch, she let out a scream, "Harry!"

The others turned and saw a shape which was obviously Harry plummeting towards the ground at high speed. Professor Sprout began to pull out her wand but didn't have time. Just as it seemed it

was too late, Harry pulled up and sped horizontally towards them, screaming with delight.

Stopping a little way from them, he suddenly saw Professor Sprout and looked worried.

"It's all right, Harry," she assured him. "You're not in trouble."

Hermione snapped, "Oh, yes he is." Running to Harry she screamed at him, "Don't you EVER do that to me again. I thought... I thought..." and she burst into tears.

By now, Harry knew what to do with a crying Hermione and he hugged her to him. "I'm sorry," he whispered.

"That was a Wronski feint," said Susan, impressed.

"I didn't faint," Harry protested.

"Hermione nearly did," Neville laughed.

"Harry," said Professor Sprout. "Madam Hooch told me you could fly, but I've never seen anything like it. Can you catch this?" She quickly conjured a small ball and somehow stuck it to the end of her wand. As she flicked her wand the ball flew away at great speed.

Finally letting Hermione go, Harry took off after the ball, catching it easily, even though, to his amazement, it kept trying to dodge away from him.

When he returned with the ball in his hand and gave it to Professor Sprout, she told him, "Our seeker is taking his NEWTs this year and has expressed a wish to leave the team if we can find someone else. Would you like to be a seeker?"

"Er... What would I have to do?"

"Well, what you just did would probably do very nicely. Now you should all be getting back."



“One more quick fly, Professor? Please?” Harry begged.

Hermione rolled her eyes.

Harry turned to Hermione. “Come with me?”

“You're not getting me up there again.”

“You liked it last time. Come on.”

Reluctantly she got on the broom behind him. “No ronky feints,” she ordered as she put her arms tightly around him.

As they flew, she let his feeling of freedom sweep over her mind and by the time they landed, she had to admit that she felt better than she had done for a while.

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During the rest of the week, Susan Bones and Hannah Abbot virtually took over Harry and Hermione's lives. Apart from the times the two girls had scheduled for Harry and Hermione to just be alone together, they weren't allowed to mope, together or alone. One of their friends was with them all the time, whether it was a friend from Hufflepuff, or from Gryffindor.

Hermione half-heartedly complained about it to Harry in one of their permitted “alone” times.

“You're just cross it's not you organising it,” laughed Harry. “I must admit though, they've only been doing this for a few days and already sometimes it feels like they're trying to make us forget mum and dad.”

“They're not,” said Hermione. “They know we won't. I think they just want to remind us we're not alone.”

“It might be better if I was,” said Harry. At Hermione's angry look, he corrected himself, “safer, I mean.”

“Harry, it's not your fault.”

Harry didn't reply.

“I mean it. I know you feel it is.”

“Feels like it.”

“Harry...” Hermione warned.

“It's true. If I hadn't been with you, they'd be okay.” Harry's tone changed suddenly to angry as he continued, “You can't tell me you don't wish sometimes that... that you were still with them instead of me.”

Hermione hesitated and Harry pounced on the pause, “See?”

Fighting the urge to lash out back at him, Hermione said quietly. “Of course I wish I were with them. But you are part of me, forever, in a way they never could be.”

“But what if he gets you next time?” Harry cried.

“He took eleven years to almost find a way back. If he takes as long for next time, we'll both be fully trained. Professor Dumbledore will make sure we can beat him.”

“It's me that has to do it,” insisted Harry.

“If you even try to do it without me, Voldemort won't need to kill you. I will,” Hermione retorted firmly.

Friday evening, the two were called aside by Professor Dumbledore, who turned to Susan, his eyes twinkling as he said, “I hate to break up your schedule, but I have some news for these two.”

“Your mother was transferred to a Muggle hospital last night. If it is convenient for you both, Madam Pomfrey will take you to visit her tomorrow afternoon.”

"That's fine, Professor," Harry replied.

As they turned away, Hermione turned back and said, "Thank you, Sir."

With a sad smile which didn't quite reach his eyes, Professor Dumbledore replied, "That's all right, it was my pleasure." Smiling more broadly, he added, "Now, should I give you an excuse note for Miss Bones?"

\* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_ \* \_  
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A teaser...

Some have mentioned from time to time that the story is dragging on in a way that they wonder if I actually have a real plan for how it will finish. The answer is yes. Without giving anything away... Hermione will discover that Harry and she have been lied to about something of critical importance by someone they trusted (and it ISN'T Dumbledore) and she will use that knowledge to gamble everything.

Long before then you can expect dramatic confrontations with the Ministry and even a period of exile in the U.S.A. (Anyone from or familiar with Salem, Massachusetts, which I understand is located about 30 miles or so north of Boston, who can beta this section will be very welcome.) This is quite a long way off in the story, though.

There is also an epilogue in which a letter reveals HOW the bond happened in the first place.

Author's note...

(N)

In canon, according to the Lexicon, Cedric Diggory was Hufflepuff's seeker and captain from 1993, Harry's third year. Harry hasn't taken his place as seeker.

Thanks to JJ Rust for spotting typos way back in chapters 24, 27, 28, 33 and 38, now corrected and re-uploaded. I also corrected an Americanism (cellophane tape) in chapter 31.

I've also corrected a typo and made a scene break in chapter 26 and re-uploaded it. I've added author's notes in chapters 9, 14 and 29 and re-uploaded them.

Please review.

Brian

## Chapter Forty-four.

By Brian Grove

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## Disclaimer:-

Various court cases have ruled that Harry Potter belongs to a very rich Englishwoman who lives in Scotland, who was a single mother when she starting writing the books whilst she was sitting in a café drinking coffee. I'm English and drink coffee, but I'm not rich, not a woman, don't live in Scotland, have never been a mother, let alone a single mother and I've never written a book sitting in a café. Damn! I guess Harry Potter doesn't belong to me. That's probably why this story is on FANfiction dot net.

The hospitals mentioned are real hospitals and I have attempted to make the procedures as realistic as possible, but anything else, including any staff mentioned, are purely figments of my imagination.

In the previous chapter...

Friends are worried about Harry and Hermione and take action to help them. Mrs. Granger was transferred to a Muggle hospital.

\*NEW\* I read so many stories that if it has been more than a few days since the previous update, I need to refresh my memory on what had happened previously in the story. To make that easier, from now on, at the bottom of the most recently published chapter, below the author's notes, is a short resume, "The story so far". This will be moved to the bottom of the next chapter each time a new chapter is posted, so you will always be able to read "the story so far" at the bottom of the most recent chapter. "The story so far" also gives the dates covered by each chapter.

[illegible]

"Your mother has been transferred to the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London," Madam Pomfrey explained to Harry and Hermione. "It is not far from St. Mungo's, but I didn't think you'd want to go there again, so we will Floo from here to the Leaky Cauldron. We did think about transferring her to a hospital closer to the Burrow. There are some good neurology units in Plymouth and Bristol, but this is the best unit in the country and it's the one easiest to get to by Floo." Madam Pomfrey realised that she was rambling and pulled herself up straight and said, "Right, let's go. Say 'Diagon Alley'."

Madam Pomfrey went first, followed by Hermione. Hermione stepped away from the fireplace quickly to avoid Harry, who, as usual, tripped as he arrived. After waving to Tom, the barman, they walked out of the Leaky Cauldron into Charing Cross road.

"Now we need to find the underground train," said Madam Pomfrey. "Apparently we have to use it to go somewhere called Russell Square, which isn't far from the hospital."

"There's a station," said Hermione, having seen the famous roundel of the London Underground. The sign said the station was Tottenham Court Road. Madam Pomfrey gave Hermione the money to pay for their tickets. Once Hermione had done so, she looked at one of the many maps on the wall. "We need the central line eastbound," she said decisively, looking around her, "That way."

After just a few minutes they felt the increase in air pressure as a train came speeding from the tunnel into the station. As they boarded the train, a voice from the speakers on the walls of the station said loudly, "Mind the doors please" and the doors slid shut behind them.

They had to change trains to the Piccadilly line at the next station, and Madam Pomfrey commented that the Piccadilly line trains seemed cleaner and more modern.

"That's because they improved them for the line to the airport," Hermione explained. It was only one more station to Russell Square. Madam Pomfrey had been given directions from there.

After walking around for about fifteen minutes, they found a policeman and asked him for directions and this time they found the hospital almost at once. It took up most of one side of a small square called Queen Square.

Once they walked inside it didn't take long to make their way to the small unit where Mrs. Granger had been placed. A nurse stopped them as they entered, and once she had asked them who they were, she warned them, "Don't be frightened by all the machinery attached to your mother. We just want to monitor her for a while to find out all we can about her condition. It doesn't mean she has suddenly got worse."

The warning was just as well as all three of them would probably have been worried by the sight that met them. Ms. Granger was lying in bed, just as she had been in St. Mungo's, but there the resemblance stopped. Three or four different machines were attached to her by a whole mass of cables. Two of the machines were making quiet "beeping" noises. She was wearing a pair of headphones and a cable ran from them to a small cassette recorder.

"It shouldn't really be plugged in here until it's checked by a hospital electrician," the nurse explained, "so don't tell anyone. I was told a visitor brought it last night." She paused briefly, then said cheerfully, "Well, I'll leave you in peace. If you need anything, just call."

"Thank you," said Madam Pomfrey.

"Remember to talk to her," the nurse added as an afterthought. "Quite often they can hear us even when they seem to be deeply unconscious."

"I don't know what to say," said Hermione.

"Just talk to her as if she were awake," the nurse advised. "Tell her how you are, what you're doing at school, all the normal things."

"Okay, thanks," said Harry.

Harry and Hermione sat on opposite sides of the bed and each took one of Mrs. Granger's hands. They both found that it was incredibly difficult to talk to someone who showed no response whatsoever. They found that they kept slipping into just talking to each other. Madam Pomfrey had slipped away somewhere to leave them alone with their mother.

Just over an hour had gone by when Madam Pomfrey returned. "Look who I found in the hospital canteen."

Hermione jumped up to give Miss Collier a hug. "What time did you have to leave this morning to get here?" she asked.

"I didn't," Miss Collier replied. "Mrs. Weasley brought me yesterday as soon as Professor Dumbledore told us that your mother had been moved here. She offered to bring me again today, but I decided to see a show last night and stay in a hotel overnight. Then I did a little bit of shopping this morning. How is she today?"

"The same," said Hermione, sadly.

"Don't worry. It's early yet. We've only just started trying to reach her."

"So you really think there's any chance?" Harry asked her.

"If I am brutally honest, very little," Miss Collier admitted. "But the doctors say that about one in ten coma patients do eventually recover and live a normal life."

"One in ten is better than those bastards at St. Mungo's would give," Harry snarled.

Hermione didn't bother to correct his swearing, but smiled briefly, then with a look of determination on her face turned to her mother and said, "We'll just have to make sure you are one of the one in ten, won't we, Mum?"

Madam Pomfrey suggested that it was time for lunch. "Where shall we go? There didn't seem to be much of a choice in the hospital restaurant."



"McDonald's!" Harry shouted, before being 'shushed' by both Madam Pomfrey and Miss Collier, the latter pointing out that as far as she knew, Madam Pomfrey wasn't deaf.

Hermione just rolled her eyes patiently. Others could never understand Harry's obsession with McDonald's, but she understood very well. It had been somewhere he'd always been left outside with the Dursleys, and one of the first places the Grangers had taken him. They could have served nothing but bread and water and it would still have been a special place for him for that reason.

"I'll pass," said Miss Collier. "I've already eaten."

After lunch, Madam Pomfrey took the two children back to the hospital.

Shortly after they'd got back a doctor came round checking all of the patients. Hermione asked him about her mother's condition and what tests they were running.

The doctor looked at her strangely, "Er., I don't think this is really... I'll explain to your er...", then he looked for support at Miss Collier, who just smiled.

"Don't worry. Just answer her questions," she said, then added mischievously, "Anything I don't understand she can explain to me afterwards."

"Er, right," he began. "At the moment we are doing various tests to see if we can find what is causing her to remain unconscious. The admitting doctor took blood for analysis and the results for most of the tests should be available on Monday. Assuming that nothing obvious shows up in those tests, she will be put down for a brain scan sometime during the next week. Until we get results, we call it a coma of unknown origin."

"And you can't tell me if she will get better until you get the results?" asked Hermione.

The doctor looked impressed. "That's right, young lady. We may know more this time next week. Any other questions?"

"Is there something I can read about comas?"

"The hospital produces a leaflet for relatives explaining quite a bit about comas. It's not really written for children, but..."

"That's okay," said Hermione, a little too brightly as she tried to hide her irritation at being thought of as a twelve year old.

"Then I'll ask the ward sister to give you one."

"Thank you."

During Hermione's conversation with the doctor, Harry had been trying to tune them out as he continued to talk with his mother. When Hermione felt strongly about something and she was close to him, it was becoming difficult not to be overwhelmed by her thoughts and feelings in his head.

Despite her calm exterior she presented to the Doctor, and even to Miss Collier and Madam Pomfrey, she was far from calm.

After another hour, during which time the nurse had brought the leaflet to Hermione, which Hermione had read aloud to her mother, Madam Pomfrey suggested it was time to go. To her surprise, Hermione asked, "Can you Apparate us to our old house?" Their old house was still empty.

Madam Pomfrey looked puzzled. "Yes, but why?"

"This leaflet has a list of books for further reading and they know me at my old library. Hogwarts won't have them and I'm not registered at any other libraries apart from my old one."

Rather than take the lift, they took the stairs, which were deserted enough that Madam Pomfrey could Apparate without being seen.

Then they had to take a bus to the town centre so Hermione could explore the relevant section of the library.

Harry decided to browse the children's section, which he thought was more interesting. He amused himself by wondering what the library assistant would think if she knew that a whole set of children's books had been written about him. Fred and George had once suggested donating a set of the books to the local library in the nearest town to Ottery St. Catchpole, the village being too small to have its own library, although it did have a van which came round twice a month. Harry hadn't been amused, although Fred's description of what he thought the rather sour-faced chief librarian would think of children's books with illustrations that moved had brought a slight smile to his face.

Hermione had spent almost an hour browsing the medical section of the library before Madam Pomfrey, sensing Harry's increasing impatience, suggested that she take some books out now as they needed to go back to Hogwarts.

That had been followed by another ten minutes or so, during which time, Hermione decided which books she would borrow, changed her mind, then changed her mind again before making her final selection.

Madam Pomfrey made a quick exploration of the area around the library until she found a secluded place. "Now I know this place, next time I can bring you straight here, instead of having to take the bus from your house. That'll save time."

"Oh good," said Harry, in a tone that suggested he wasn't as happy as his words suggested, "more time in the library."

He was rewarded with a glare from Hermione, while Madam Pomfrey tried to hide a slight smirk.

Madam Pomfrey thought to herself that it would not only save time, but also make it easier emotionally on both Hermione and Harry. Going back to where it had happened, and seeing what had been their home, boarded up while a decision was made about what to do with it, had obviously been hard on both children, legally adults or not.

As soon as they appeared in Hogsmeade, Harry asked what time it was.

“Great! If I run, I’ll still make part of the Quidditch practice.” With Madam Pomfrey’s permission he immediately began to run back to Hogwarts.

Hermione walked back more slowly with Madam Pomfrey, but Madam Pomfrey could see how eager she was to get back and start reading her books.

She was so eager, in fact, that she was late for dinner that evening and Harry had to ask Hannah Abbot to go down and remind her.

The conversation over dinner was a lecture from Hermione on care of people in a coma, which left everyone else none the wiser as they could barely understand a word of what Hermione was saying.

Poor Susan made the mistake of asking what Glasgow had to do with it and was treated to a ten minute mini lecture about that as well.

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Author’s note...

My apologies for the delay. A number of difficult real life events simply got in the way. Hopefully the worst problems are now past, so I’ll actually have time to write again.

I made one minor alteration to the previous chapter adding a line for George...

“More fun breaking the rules,” Fred replied.

“Didn’t want to ruin our reputation,” George added.

Thank you to The Thirteenth Rose and to Lizz for spotting some typos in chapter 43, now corrected.

Thanks to JJ Rust, my omega? for spotting typo in chapters 40 and 42, now corrected and re-uploaded.

Thanks to my beta for this chapter, Militis, a.k.a. Mike and omega13a.

Please review.

Brian

## Chapter Forty-five.

By Brian Grove

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### Disclaimer:-

I'm still not rich, not a woman, don't live in Scotland, have never been a mother, let alone a single mother and I've never written a book sitting in a café so Harry Potter doesn't belong to me. The domain name should really have given you a clue.

In the previous chapter...

Harry and Hermione went with Madam Pomfrey to visit Mrs. Granger in the Muggle hospital.

**\*REMEMBER\*** If you need to refresh your memory on what had happened previously in this story, below the author's notes, is a short resume, "The story so far". "The story so far" also gives the dates covered by each chapter.

[illegible]

Life at Hogwarts continued normally. They were learning that Professor Dumbledore, who was teaching most of the Defence Against the Dark Arts lessons, was actually a very good teacher, even if it wasn't his best subject. He had previously taught Transfiguration. To the surprise of most of the students, he was not only very knowledgeable of the subject, but entertaining and at times, quite humorous.

He had tried to persuade Professor McGonagall to teach Defence and allow him to teach Transfiguration, but she smiled and shook her head, “Oh, no. I've never defeated any Dark Lords. You're the one with an Order of Merlin.”

Somewhat grumpily he had responded, "If defeating a Dark Lord is the criteria, perhaps I should let Harry teach it."

Professor McGonagall looked worried for half a second until she made sure that his expression confirmed that Professor Dumbledore was only joking.

Harry had begun training regularly with the Hufflepuff Quidditch team, and he enjoyed himself immensely. To his surprise, Hermione always accompanied him to the practices, though she insisted on staying firmly on the ground thank you very much. Hermione had found that Harry's sheer exhilaration when he was flying made her feel better too, even if she felt slightly guilty about feeling good while her father was dead and her mother almost as good as dead.

The last Saturday in February was the stage for the Hufflepuff versus Gryffindor Quidditch match, a long and rather boring game, which Hufflepuff eventually won, barely. Hermione whispered to Harry that they've have won a lot quicker if Harry had been playing as she'd noticed that he'd seen the snitch really early on.

Over Easter they went to the Burrow, at Molly's insistence and, they had to admit that Molly's occasionally overbearing form of love did make them feel much more that they weren't alone. As supportive as their friends at Hogwarts were, it wasn't the same.

Hermione especially loved helping to care for all the younger children now living at the much-enlarged Burrow even though she'd previously never really thought of herself as the maternal type.

She wondered how Molly could take caring for so many in her stride as she did, yet still have time for her and Harry while they were there. She even found time to Apparate Harry and Hermione to the hospital almost every day and got Arthur to do it when she didn't have time.

The only downside to being there was that so many children weren't exactly conducive to calm and Hermione did occasionally wish for time alone; some peace and quiet to read.

On the first Saturday, Miss Collier visited. During term time, of course, she had been here every day, teaching mostly Muggleborn children in the school. The new school building, a short distance from the Burrow itself, had been enlarged to have two classrooms since they had left for Hogwarts, one for Miss Collier to teach in, and one for Remus Lupin.

The twins, Fred and George, or Gred and Forge as they insisted on calling themselves, had been begging their mother to allow them to go to the hospital to visit Mrs. Granger.

Molly's reaction had been predictable. "I'd never be able to show my face there again," she had cried, putting her foot down.

Nevertheless, on the Saturday morning when Miss Collier arrived, the twins asked yet again.

"I keep telling you," Molly replied, "The hospital has sick people there. They don't need your brand of lunacy."

"Actually," Miss Collier said quietly, "they aren't sick in the normal sense of the word. Fred and George can't do any harm, and you never know, they might actually help her."

Molly looked surprised. "You think so?"

The brief look of hopefulness on Molly's face told Hermione in that moment how desperate Molly was for some good news about Hermione's mother. Hermione had known that Molly and her mother had become very close in the few years before Hermione and Harry had started at Hogwarts, it was obvious that Molly would be willing to try anything, even help from Fred and George, if there was the slightest chance of helping her mother.

Once they entered the ward where Mrs. Granger was, Fred and George quickly pulled the curtains around the bed and stuck a small marble near the top of the curtain and another near the bottom.

"What did you just do?" Hermione asked.



“Just keeping the Muggles out,” George explained.

At Hermione's questioning look, Fred added “They had a sticky charm to keep the curtains sealed and a mild Muggle repelling charm to make sure that nobody would try to get in and get suspicious.”

“But you can't do magic out of school,” Hermione pointed out.

“We didn't,” said Fred.

“But you said...”

“We did the charms while we were back at Hogwarts. So no magic was done here. Isn't that right, Fred?” said George, looking smug.

“Right,” said Fred.

“Anyhow, forget about that. Take these,” said George, handing Hermione and Harry each a biscuit.

“George...” Hermione began.

“I'm Fred,” George interrupted.

“No, you're Gred, I'm Forge,” said Fred.

“No, I'm Forge, you're Gred.”

Seeing this looked like continuing for a while, Hermione stepped between them. “Look, this isn't a time for a prank.”

“Hermione,” said George, suddenly turning serious. “We love your mother too.” For a second Hermione could have sworn that she saw a tear in George's eye, but then he blinked and it was gone.

“We want to help,” added Fred.

“Eat the biscuits, please.”

“Do I want to know what they do?”

Fred shook his head.

"I thought not. Look, I know you want to help but..."

"Hermione," Harry interrupted firmly. "Eat the biscuit."

She turned to Harry, hesitating.

"Please?"

Hermione and Harry both ate the biscuits they had been given and waited nervously to see what had changed.

After a minute, Hermione said, "Nothing happened," then her mouth dropped open as she heard her voice. "Why am I speaking like Harry?"

"Actually, you're not, not exactly..." George began.

"You're sounding like Harry used to sound when he was about eight years old."

"In that book about memories you had, like you said, hearing familiar voices can help..."

"But it also said that older memories are more powerful, so we made you sound like Harry did when your mother first knew him."

"And what about me?" asked Harry, then gasped at the squeakiness of his voice.

Even Hermione had to laugh, though it came out as a nervous giggle.

"Well, you see she's known Hermione a lot longer," Fred explained.

"So we made you sound like Hermione when she was about four years old."

"How long does this last?" asked Harry, still amazed at the voice coming out of his mouth. "Tell me it's reversible."

"Ah," said Fred.

"Ah?" asked Hermione.

"We haven't really had much time to test it. But it'll wear off eventually."

"Eventually?" asked Harry, trying and failing to sound threatening.

"An hour, two, three..."

"Maybe a day..."

"Or two..."

"Great," squeaked Harry. "I might be speaking like a four-year old girl for days."

"If it helps her, does it matter?" asked Fred.

"Wait a minute," said Hermione.

"What?"

"That book was in my dorm at school. Boys can't get in there, and you're not in Hufflepuff anyway."

"I told you she'd think of that," George said.

"You did. You did. And you were right."

"Fred, George. Who did you get to take the book?"

"Nobody."

"But you can't get in there. It says so..."

"In Hogwarts, a history," Fred, George and Harry chorused.

"And that is why, my dear Hermione," began Fred.

"You should never believe everything you read," George finished, then, dismissing the subject he turned to Mrs. Granger and said, "Hi, Mrs G. Gred and Forge here. We'll be back to tell you all about what they've been up to at school later, but for now we'll leave you with Harry and Hermione. Only they miss you a lot and really want you to come back to them."

With that George swept through the curtains, which opened for him. Fred followed him and the curtains sealed themselves shut behind them. "We'll be back in a few hours."

Outside the hospital, Fred turned to George and said, "Right, two hours to explore all that Muggle London has to offer."

At the end of two hours, Molly Weasley entered the ward and the curtains let her in. She found a rather sad-looking Harry. "What's the matter?"

Forgetting the charm, he answered, "I hoped, after the biscuits..."

Mrs. Weasley, on hearing Harry speaking with a small girl's voice, said rather coldly, "Biscuits? What have the twins been up to now?"

"Us, Mum?" said Fred, who had just run into the ward with George, trying and failing to sound innocent.

"What have you done to Harry?"

"Oh, that," Fred replied, trying to sound casual.

Of course, Mrs. Weasley wasn't fooled for a moment. "Yes, that."

"It's nothing much. We just thought that hearing them sound younger might help."

"But it didn't," Harry said morosely. "There's no change."

“Ridiculous. Now change him back at once,” Mrs. Weasley said forcefully.

“Oh, er. Well, actually...”

“Yes?”

“We haven't quite worked out that bit yet,” George admitted, somewhat chagrined.

“But it'll wear off in a few hours.”

“A few hours?” asked Mrs. Weasley, sternly.

“Or maybe days,” George admitted.

“You'll get the Ministry down on us, just you see. And put your father's job in danger. All for a silly prank.”

“We didn't do the magic here,” Fred explained.

“We did it at Hogwarts.”

“And if a nurse had walked in and heard Harry like this?”

Deciding that it was probably best not to tell Mrs. Weasley about the charm on the curtains, Harry answered, “We were going to have laryngitis.”

“We?” Mrs. Weasley replied. “Don't tell me you pulled this trick on Hermione too.”

“Hers wore off a while ago,” said Harry. “She didn't eat all the biscuit – she doesn't like ginger biscuits.”

“Remember that, George,” said Fred. “Don't use ginger if you want to prank Hermione.”

"Don't you dare prank that poor girl again!" She turned to Mrs. Granger. "I apologise for my boys. I shouldn't have let them come. I'll just bring Harry and Hermione next time."

The twins looked upset and not a little angry.

"Not one word, and don't pull that 'long-face', hurt-and-angry act with me," their mother warned. "We'll discuss this another time. Come on, we'd better go find Hermione."

But Hermione wasn't at the nurses' station, nor in the canteen. "Fred?"

"Yes, Mum?"

"Go back and check the ward again."

"Yes, Mum."

"And come straight back. No tricks."

"Yes, Mum."

George went to go with him.

"You stay here. He's less likely to get into any trouble if you're not together."

When Fred returned, he said "She's not there, Mum. I even asked a nurse to check the toilets. She said that Hermione ran off in tears."

Molly seethed with anger at the boys. "See what you've done now? She could be anywhere. It can be dangerous for a young girl on her own in London." It was the right thing to be concerned, she knew, as not all of London's denizens were friendly. More than one child, magical or otherwise, had disappeared on London's streets and she didn't want that to happen to Hermione, after all the trauma the girl had suffered.

"We'll help you look for her," offered George.

“Oh no, you won't. I'm taking the three of you home at once, then I'll come back to try to find her.” As they walked out of the main entrance, she was saying, almost in a mumble, “I'll have to tell the Ministry, of course, and Professor Dumbledore...”

Her voice faltered as she looked across the street to the square.

“Hermione!” squealed Harry, as he ran across to the square; not caring, or even noticing, that he was almost hit by a car in his eagerness to reach her.

Hermione was sitting on a bench in the park, her head in her hands, crying.

“Hermione?” asked Harry, trying to sense her through their bond, but her feelings were too overwhelmed to be coherent. It felt like trying to hear someone whispering in a noisy room full of people.

Unable to reach her through the bond, Harry touched her on the shoulder, then on her cheek, and said again, “Hermione?”

She lifted her face and he saw tear marks had run down her cheeks.

“What's wrong?”

She handed him a long piece of paper she had been grasping in her hand.

By this time Mrs. Weasley and the twins had caught up with them. “Hermione, I'm sorry the twins upset you. I won't let them come again.”

At first Hermione barely seemed to register what Mrs. Weasley had said, then, spotting the twins, she got up and flew at them, drawing them into an almost bone-crushing hug.

Finally turning to Mrs. Weasley she, took the paper from Harry's hand and said almost in a whisper, “The nurse gave me this.”

Mrs. Weasley looked at the paper which was just a bunch of squiggly lines to her. She shook her head.

“It's a recording of Mum's brain waves. They changed.”

“I don't understand.”

“It means their Mum knew they were there,” explained Fred.

Mrs. Weasley and Harry still looked confused.

“Don't you see?” Hermione almost screamed. “It means she's still in there somewhere. We just have to find a way to bring her back.”

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Author's notes...

My muse came back from its summer holiday, so the NEXT chapter is already written (while this one was being beta'd) and is now with my betas, so it should be online VERY soon.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler.

Thanks to alix33 for spotting I'd used “it's” instead of “its” AGAIN, now corrected. (I can't BELIEVE I keep on making that basic mistake!

Please review.

Brian



## Chapter Forty-six.

By Brian Grove

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Disclaimer:-

The domain name should really have given you a clue. I don't own Harry Potter and this plot bunny owns me.

In the previous chapter...

The twins decide to help Mrs. Granger.

**\*REMEMBER\*** If you need to refresh your memory on what had happened previously in this story, below the author's notes, is a short resume, "The story so far". "The story so far" also gives the dates covered by each chapter.

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"Don't you see?" Hermione almost screamed. "It means she's still in there somewhere. We just have to find a way to bring her back."

Hermione's pronouncement was met by stunned silence, finally broken by Harry. "She's going to get better?"

Hermione's face fell a little. "It doesn't mean that. The nurse warned me. Often it goes no further than this. But she has a chance now. Before... there was nothing."

Nobody seemed to know how to respond to that until Fred said, "I guess this means we can come again after all?"

Mrs. Weasley, who had been almost in a dream following Hermione's pronouncement, was brought back to reality by Fred's comment. "Your father and I will speak to you two later about experimenting on Hermione and Harry," she said firmly.

The hope on Fred's face disappeared.

“When we get home, you can go and clear the gnomes out of the garden.”

“Mum!” cried Fred and George together.

Almost under her breath, she added, “You can tell them how proud I am of you.”

If everyone looked stunned at her sudden compliment, she brushed it aside by turning to Hermione and waving her wand, “There's that's better,” she said in a satisfied tone as her puffy eyes and tear-marks vanished. “We couldn't have you going back to the others with a face like that, could we?”

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Easter day was a day marked by chocolate. The younger ones seemed to have a knack for putting more chocolate over their faces than into their stomachs and even Mrs. Weasley gave up repeatedly trying to clean them up until the eggs were finished.

The twins didn't have any more of their special biscuits so their mother insisted that she help them make them. “We'll need a hair from Hermione and Harry. Don't get them mixed up,” Fred instructed.

“It works a bit like polyjuice potion,” George explained.

“Do you two know how dangerous this could have been?” their mother asked.

“But it worked though,” George replied.

His mother was unable to answer that.

Hermione ended the sudden gap in the conversation. “What's polyjuice potion?” she asked.

“Nothing you need worry about until you are much older,” Mrs. Weasley said, shooing everyone out of the kitchen while the biscuits were baking.

Fred whispered to Hermione, “We'll tell you later.”

His mother had heard and said firmly, “You will not. I will not have you lead Hermione into trouble.”

“Mum, honestly, do you think we could ever lead her into trouble?”

“I mean, she's like having you in the dorms.”

Harry couldn't help snorting with laughter slightly at Fred's last comments and was rewarded with a glare from Hermione.

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Despite Harry and Hermione going to visit their mother in hospital every day, using the biscuits, Mrs. Granger's condition didn't improve any further. Mrs. Weasley had insisted that the twins give the Harry biscuits to Harry and the Hermione biscuits to Hermione rather than swapping, much to the twins disappointment and Harry's relief.

Miss Collier had wondered about using the biscuits herself during the term time, but the thought of the staff reaction if they heard her speaking with the voice of a four or five year old girl put her off.

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Back in Hogwarts, lessons carried on as before, until the twins slipped one of their biscuits onto the staff table at breakfast.

By chance it was Professor McGonagall who was the unlucky victim and even Professor Snape had trouble keeping a straight face when he heard the rather staid Professor McGonagall speaking with the voice of a five-year-old Hermione.

She walked from the staff table to where the twins were sitting. "I know you two had something to do with this. How long does it last?" she squeaked.

Harry, sitting at the Hufflepuff table, burst out laughing.

"Harry Potter! Come here!"

When he had reached the Gryffindor table, she said, "I am surprised at you, Mr. Potter. How did you do it?"

Harry involuntarily glanced at the twins, which Professor McGonagall spotted at once. "I knew it. Twenty points from Gryffindor! Each! And detention every night next week."

The twins gasped.

"Please, Professor," said Hermione, who had followed Harry. "If they get points deducted for pranking a teacher, shouldn't they get points added for doing something good?"

"Make your point, Mrs. Potter."

Hermione explained what the biscuits had been for and how they had worked in the hospital. Professor McGonagall was obviously moved. "We will forego the detentions," she relented, "but the points deductions stand."

As she turned away, she added, "Oh, and Messrs. Weasley?"

"Yes?"

"Fifty points for excellent potions and charms work, and fifty for helping another student."

"Each?" asked Fred.

"Each, Mr. Weasley."

“Wow,” said George as the professor walked away. “Two hundred points between us. Even Percy never earned a hundred points in one day.”

“Mum'll never believe it,” replied Fred.

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May saw Hufflepuff's final Quidditch match of the season, against Slytherin. With NEWT exams coming up for their regular seeker, Harry finally had his chance to play.

“You do realise, you're the first first-year on a Quidditch team for ages,” Ron had commented when Harry had told him.

“Over one hundred years,” said Hermione.

“How do you know?” Ron asked. “You don't even like Quidditch.”

“Not much,” Hermione admitted, “But I can read a book on Quidditch history at Hogwarts if I want to.”

Ron sighed. “I should have guessed. A book.”

“It wouldn't do you any harm to read some,” Hermione retorted. “We might not have NEWTS, but we still have our end of year exams. I'm dreading them. Everyone says they're really hard.”

“How hard can they be?” asked Ron. “I mean; Marcus Flint must have passed them as he's still here.”

Marcus Flint was the Slytherin Quidditch captain and was well known as not exactly the smartest wizard around.

That got the conversation back to Quidditch as Ron had intended, and Hermione took herself to the library to study.

The match itself was rough. Most of the goals were from penalties due to fouls by the Slytherin team, especially Flint, whose main tactic

seemed to be crashing into the Hufflepuff players. The score didn't really matter because Ravenclaw were almost certain to win the cup unless Slytherin beat Hufflepuff by more than four hundred points, which wasn't likely.

Suddenly Harry, who had been circling high above the chaos below, dived through them all, quickly followed by the Slytherin seeker. Harry pulled up at the last moment, but the Slytherin wasn't quite so agile. He pulled up and almost made it. Almost. He avoided ploughing straight into the ground, but still touched the ground as he tried to recover from the dive and was knocked from his broom and went skipping across the ground, eventually crashing into the stand.

"And Potter performs a perfect Wronski Feint and puts the Slytherin seeker out of the match," Lee announced gleefully. "That'll teach him from following Harry around all the time."

A moment later, Harry dived again, not so far this time, and caught the snitch easily. A moment later he fell from his broom, as Flint crashed into him at full speed.

He woke up just a few minutes later in the hospital wing to see a worried looking Hermione.

"Did we win?" he asked.

"Boys!" Hermione almost screamed. "You almost get yourself killed and all you can ask is if we won?"

"Be fair, Hermione," said Susan, who had gone with them to the hospital wing and been allowed to stay to keep Hermione calm. "He didn't almost get himself killed. That was Flint and he had no right to attack Harry like that after he'd already caught the snitch."

"I caught it? So we won? Did we?"

"Yes," huffed Hermione. "We won."

When Madam Pomfrey released him from the hospital wing the next day, Harry was the star of the victory party – they'd decided not to have it after the match, but wait until Harry could join them.

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The exams were over and most students in Hogwarts were pleased. Not Hermione. “I thought they'd be a lot more challenging,” she complained.

“They were to most of us,” Ron commented.

Neville and their other friends murmured their agreement. Only Susan disagreed. “They weren't that hard,” she said. “Not if you studied.”

“If you two had spent much more time in that library, they'd have had to move your beds in there,” Hannah commented.

“I wonder if...” mused Susan.

“Don't even joke about it, Susan,” said Harry. “Or you'll have Hermione wanting to form another house, the Library house.”

The others laughed.

With the exams past, frivolity seemed to rule Hogwarts for the last few days. Fred and George were making a swift trade in their voice-changing biscuits. Even Professor Flitwick had bought some, and rumour had it that he had spent a few hours joking with his Ravenclaws with Professor McGonagall's voice. Ron and Harry had tried to make the twins say how they got hold of a hair from Professor McGonagall, but the twins weren't telling.

Fred and George spent one evening creeping the halls and sneaking up behind innocent first year's and yelling at them in Filch's voice. Nobody wanted to ask them how they got HIS hair.

In the final dinner, Professor Dumbledore began his announcement and was surprised to find himself speaking in the voice of one of the

Ravenclaw first year girls. He seemed highly amused and proceeded to award the House Cup to Gryffindor still using the poor girl's voice. The innocent first year was highly embarrassed but everyone else was sure that Professor Dumbledore could have ended the enchantment if he had wanted to.

Hermione actually asked him afterwards and he replied, "Maybe I could have, but why spoil such a good joke?"

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The next day was the ride on the Hogwarts Express back to King's Cross. "You really ought to come back to the Burrow," Ron was insisting, horrified that Harry and Hermione were going to return to the Dursleys. "I'm sure Dumbledore or Bill could put up some good wards."

Even Susan joined in, "After all, you killed You-Know-Who. It should be safe now."

Harry and Hermione almost shouted "Voldemort." Hermione added, "If he's dead now, why are you still afraid to say his name?"

"Perhaps you might be better at the Burrow," suggested Neville. "I mean, your relatives don't sound like very nice Muggles."

Harry snorted. "It's okay. We can deal with them if they get out of line. We can use magic after all."

Even Hermione was amused by the evil grin on his face as he said that.

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Author's notes...

I finally made it to the end of their first year at Hogwarts! (Would a certain reviewer like to apologise? Thought not.)



Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler.

Please review.

Brian

THE STORY SO FAR – this is a quick reference for anyone wanting to refresh their memory, perhaps coming back to my story after a break.

The “Before Hogwarts” part is at the bottom of chapter 27.

A summary of each “Year” at Hogwarts will be at the end of the final chapter of each year.

At the bottom of the latest chapter to be published will be a summary of what has happened in that “Year” up to that point.

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Chapters 1-27 mid JULY 1988 - Sunday 1st September 1991

For a summary of the story BEFORE they get to Hogwarts, see the bottom of chapter 27

Chapter 27 19th September 1990 continued - Sunday 1st September 1991

Hermione organises a Parent Teacher Association. Hermione and Harry go to

Hogwarts are are sorted into Slytherin and Hufflepuff respectively.

Chapter 28 Sunday 1st September 1991 continued - morning of Monday 2nd September

1991

Harry and Hermione talk in their dreams. Hermione rows with Snape and Harry

senses her feelings from his dormitory.

Chapter 29 afternoon of Monday 2nd September 1991 (Hermione attacked) - Tuesday

3rd Sep (Hermione attacked again and placed into Ravenclaw) - Wednesday 4th Sep

(Harry goes to see the hat) - Thursday 5th Sep breakfast.

Hermione is repeatedly attacked in Slytherin and placed into Ravenclaw, where they

are suspicious of her. The sorting hat announces that they are married.

Chapter 30

Thursday 5th September 1991, morning

With Professor Sprout's help, Hermione reconciles with Harry and they are sorted

together into Hufflepuff.

Chapter 31

Thursday 5th September 1991, afternoon and evening

The Slytherins and Ravenclaws got pranked. Hermione discovers they are legally

adults. Hufflepuffs plan a party. Dumbledore worried about Harry turning dark.

Chapter 32

Friday 6th September 1991, lunchtime Saturday 7th September 1991.

They discover the three-headed dog and make friends with Neville.

### Chapter 33

Saturday 7th September 1991 afternoon - Sunday 8th September 1991 breakfast

They had their first flying lesson, Hermione's welcome home party, and learned the

hard way about Rita Skeeter

### Chapter 34

Sunday 8th September 1991

Hermione attacked by a howler

### Chapter 35

Sunday 8th September 1991 - Thursday 31st October 1991

The Prophet admitted the truth (sort of!) and Hermione, Harry, Susan, Ron and

Neville faced a troll...

### Chapter 36

Friday 1st November 1991 - Sunday, 1st December 1991

Harry and the others found out the Philosopher's Stone is at Hogwarts and that

Voldemort is nearby...

### Chapter 37

Sunday, 1st December 1991 - Wednesday 25th December 1991  
midday

Harry confronted Quirrell/Voldemort and destroyed the mirror of  
Erised. Voldemort

struck back by attacking the Grangers on Christmas day...

## Chapter 38

Wednesday 25th December 1991 midday - Saturday 28th December  
1991

Harry killed Quirrell, but Mr. Granger is dead and Mrs. Granger in St.  
Mungo's,

possibly forever. Dumbledore told Harry and Hermione of the  
prophecy and Hermione

said that they should go to live at the Dursleys....

## Chapter 39

Tuesday 31st December 1991 (with flashbacks to Saturday 29th and  
Sunday morning

30th December 1991)

Harry and Hermione returned to live at the Dursleys....

## Chapter 40

Wednesday 1st January 1992 (with flashbacks back to Monday 23rd  
December 1991) -

Wednesday 8th January 1992

Harry and Hermione at the Dursleys over the New Year...

## Chapter 41

Wednesday 8th January 1992 - Thursday 16th January 1992

Harry and Hermione return to Hogwarts.

#### Chapter 42

Saturday 18th January 1992

Harry and Hermione visit Mrs. Granger at St. Mungo's and after being refused the

chance to try a Muggle treatment, Harry demands that she be moved to a Muggle

hospital...

#### Chapter 43

Monday 20th January 1992 - Friday 24th January 1992

Friends are worried about Harry and Hermione and take action to help them. Mrs.

Granger was transferred to a Muggle hospital.

#### Chapter 44

Saturday 25th January 1992

Harry and Hermione went with Madam Pomfrey to visit Mrs. Granger in the Muggle hospital.

#### Chapter 45

Sunday 26th January 1992 – Saturday 18th April 1992 (Easter Saturday)

The twins decide to help Mrs. Granger.

Chapter 46 (this chapter)

Saturday 18th April 1992 (Easter Saturday) - Saturday 20th June 1992

Fun with biscuits and Harry's first Quidditch match.

Harry snorted in disgust. "Come on. We'll shrink these trunks and make our own way." Making sure that nobody was looking, he quickly pulled out her wand.

"But we haven't done shrinking charms yet," she objected.

"The twins showed me. They're always using them for pranks and smuggling stuff from the kitchen or from Hogsmeade."

"Are you sure you know how to do them properly? I'm not sure you should..."

Ignoring her, Harry cut off her objection by shrinking their trunks. "There. You take the two trunks and I'll take Hedwig..." Picking up the cage he said, "Hedwig, what have they been feeding you at Hogwarts? If I let you out can you find your own way to the Dursleys'?"

Hedwig gave Harry a look that could only be described as both offended and disgusted.

At Harry's look of bewilderment, Hermione explained, "Firstly you should never comment on a lady's weight and to ask an owl if he can find somewhere, well, no wonder she looks insulted."

"Okay, Hedwig" he quickly apologised. "Sorry I asked. But don't try to get in there until we get there, okay?" He let her out and she quickly flew away, after giving one loud hoot that made some passers-by briefly glance in their direction.

Once they'd looked away, another shrinking charm later and Harry was holding a much smaller cage. "So where do we go?" he asked Hermione.

Hermione walked to a large route map on the wall. Obviously looking puzzled, a boy a bit younger than them asked them. "You lost?"

"We want to go to Epsom, Surrey," Hermione replied.

"I think we need to go to Paddington," Harry added helpfully.

"Paddington?" the boy laughed. "That's for trains to Reading, Oxford, Bristol, Wales and Devon and Cornwall, places like that. Everyone knows that." (N)



Hermione decided not to point out that obviously not EVERYONE knew that.

Harry wasn't as diplomatic. "Okay. Know-it-all. Where DO we go?"

The boy muttered something under his breath and walked off.

"Great, Harry. Now we have to queue for enquiries."

Half an hour later they were rising up the escalator in Victoria station and quarter of an hour after that they were on a train pulling out of Victoria bound for Sutton, Epsom, Dorking and Horsham. It was almost the rush hour, so the train was crowded but there were still seats. The good thing about the crowd was the fact that Hermione ended up riding almost the whole way leaning back against Harry; with her face next to his and his arms wrapped around her waist. For a short while, Harry felt the some of the tension he had been carrying around melt away.

It was three quarters of an hour after leaving Victoria that they pulled into Epsom as the platform speakers were announcing the stations it would call at on its way to Horsham.

Being fairly sure that there would not be food waiting for them at the Dursleys', they ate in a café close to the station.. Hermione was not feeling talkative and Harry didn't want to press the matter, even if he felt a certain sadness that she wasn't opening up to him the way she usually did. It made their meal together an almost unfriendly time – which, in itself, was something dramatically different than anything he was used to from Hermione. The food sat cold and hard in his stomach during the short bus ride which left them five minutes' walk from Privet Drive.

"Oh, it's you," was the response from Petunia when she opened the front door. She turned her back on them and left the door open. "Make sure you lock the door," she said as she walked into the kitchen.

"Dudley not home yet?" Harry asked, trying to make polite conversation.

"No," snapped Vernon from the lounge. "Smeltings is a normal boarding school and doesn't start its holidays until the first week of July."

As they walked up the stairs, Hermione muttered, "Welcome home, Harry. It's so nice to see you."

As soon as Harry had returned their trunks and Hedwig's cage to a normal size and unpacked, as Hermione had insisted that they do it at once, Hermione got out one of their books.

"We only just got here," Harry protested. "We've got ages to do our homework."

"No time like the present," she retorted, "We might even get it all done before Dudley comes home." Her eyes returned quickly to the book she was reading.

When she had still written only the title of her first essay three hours later, Harry knew something was wrong.

"What's wrong?" he asked her, just to get her to speak. He knew what was wrong. Her feelings were strong enough that he could feel them too.

Hermione didn't answer.

"I miss them too," Harry said quietly.

"I can't stop thinking about how it was when we went home at Christmas. They were so excited to see us, almost as excited as we were. Then, at the Burrow, it was different, but they were still happy to see us. But here..." She left the rest unspoken. "Harry it's not your fault your relatives are so..." she was struggling to find a word bad enough, and failed... "...horrid."

“Victoria?” asked the clerk in the booking office. “If it's London you want, you'd be quicker going to Waterloo. It only takes about half an hour.”

"That's okay. Get off at Vauxhall and you're on the Victoria line."

Unlike the train from Victoria to Epsom, the train to Waterloo had automatic doors, which Harry found fascinating.

The ticket they had been sold at Epsom included the fare for the Underground, so they didn't have to queue for another ticket. Another quick change of trains at Green Park took them to Russell Square.

Harry decided to leave Hermione alone with her mother so he crept out without her noticing him and found the canteen.

As they walked back to the Underground station, Hermione saw a bus. “That says Waterloo. Why don't we get that? We'd see more of London that way.”

The 188 bus took them through Holborn and Aldwych, but Hermione was disappointed that they didn't pass through Trafalgar Square.

After leaving the bus at Waterloo, they were soon on their way back to Epsom. Hermione seemed a little more cheerful having seen her mother, even if there had been no response.

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The next day was bright and sunny, so Hermione suggested that they buy things for a picnic and take their books and study in Epsom Common, which was only about a mile or so away from Privet Drive.

The rest of June and the beginning of July went slowly by in the same way. Sunny days were spent doing their homework in Epsom Common, while cloudy or rainy days were spent visiting Mrs. Granger in the hospital.

Vernon and Petunia seemed to be ignoring them completely, which, as Harry and Hermione were doing their best to avoid them, suited them quite well.

At the end of the first week in July, Dudley returned home from his boarding school, Smeltings. It had been a sunny day, so Harry and Hermione had spent most of the day in Epsom Common as usual, but as the afternoon wore on, the light breeze which had made the day pleasant began to get stronger and the sun disappeared behind increasingly dark clouds.

Hermione and Harry began to make their way back to Privet Drive as quickly as they could. A short distance before they arrived back, the heavens opened and they began to run to try to get in before they got too wet. Unfortunately Hermione tripped and fell, hitting her knee hard on the kerb.

As neither of them knew any healing spells, Harry had to help a badly limping Hermione home, while her knee was bleeding quite badly. Of course they arrived just as Dudley had also arrived. Dudley was

opening the garage door and complaining that his father hadn't bought an automatic garage opener so that he wouldn't have to get wet.

Seeing Harry and Hermione, he decided to vent his bad temper on them. "Your freaky girlfriend hurt herself? I'm surprised she even has blood like normal people."

Harry whipped out his wand and Dudley's skin turned blue. They walked into the house, leaving Vernon blustering and Dudley asking what was the matter.

They had just reached the door of their room when Dudley finally noticed what had happened. His shriek of a mixture of anger and fear reduced Hermione and Harry to rollicking laughter.

"You freaks get back down here and put him right," Vernon roared.

"No," shouted Harry. "He looks better as an overgrown Smurf."

The thought of Dudley as a Smurf sent Hermione into another fit of giggles.

"If you don't change him back, you can get out now!"

Harry turned and walked back to the top of the stairs to retort, "Really? He's a bit big for a Smurf right now, but I know a great shrinking charm."

Petunia asked, "How long will he stay like this?"

"Not long," Harry replied, "this time, anyway." He looked at Petunia pointedly before slamming the door to their bedroom.

During this exchange Hermione had found an handkerchief and wound it around her knee. "Tomorrow," she announced, "I want to go to Diagon Alley and get a book on healing charms."

"I can't believe all the books on healing are in the Restricted Section," said Harry.

“Madam Pomfrey insisted on it, apparently,” Hermione explained. “She was worried that students would do more damage trying to heal themselves.”

“But you're going to anyway,” Harry grinned.

The next day, after visiting Mrs. Granger in the hospital, they decided to “play tourist” and explored the area around Charing Cross and Trafalgar Square. Harry almost managed to push Hermione in the fountains at Trafalgar Square, but she was just too quick for him.

A short walk up the Charing Cross Road took them to the Leaky Cauldron and into Diagon Alley. Harry wanted an ice cream, Hermione insisted that they go to Flourish & Blotts first before they have a meal. “We can go to Fortescue's for an ice cream AFTER we've eaten properly,” she said.

The following day was bright and cheerful, so they took the bus to Leatherhead, then another bus to BoxHill, a large country park. The view was, as Hermione had promised, wonderful. It was a little misty on the hilltop at first, but as the day became warmer, the mist dissipated and in the clear sunlight they could see a long way, right across to the hills of the South Downs, near the South Coast.

Even though “Smurf” Dudley had returned to normal by the morning after he had returned home, the entire Dursley family hadn't spoken to either Harry or Hermione since then, something Harry claimed he wasn't entirely unhappy about.

Despite Harry's claims, however, Hermione noticed that Harry was slowly becoming quieter. She decided to cheer him up by taking him to Chessington Zoo, which was only a couple of short bus rides away.

The highlight of their day was the Snake exhibit. When they passed the Burmese Python cage, (N3) some annoying boy was shouting at the snake, demanding that it move. Harry walked to the cage and spoke to the snake. “I bet you get fed up with idiots like him.”

To his amazement the snake lifted its head and replied, "I'm used to it."

Hermione shook her head in disbelief and gasped, "You're a parselmouth."

"A what?"

"A parselmouth. You speak parseltongue. You can talk to snakes."

"Oh. Why don't you try?"

Hermione turned to the snake and said hello, but the snake didn't show any reaction.

Disappointed, but not surprised, she said, "See, Harry? It's not very common." She looked slightly jealous as Harry and the snake spoke together in the low, sibilant tones for almost three minutes. Turning back to Hermione, Harry said, "It's a pity we can't bring Dudley here. Can you imagine Aunt Petunia's reaction if I set the snake on her Precious Duddykins?"

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Author's notes...

(N)The Lexicon correctly points out that despite Harry taking a train from Paddington station in London in *Philosopher's Stone*, NO trains to Surrey leave from Paddington. Even if the trainspotter thought that everyone knew that, everyone obviously didn't include JKR. An essay on the Lexicon site suggests that Harry must live just to the west of Heathrow (London) Airport in part of Surrey where the nearest station is in another county, and is on the line from Paddington. Having looked closely at the county boundaries and the closeness of other stations which are in Surrey, like Staines, I am not convinced. I think JKR simply didn't check her facts and got it wrong, just as, when describing platforms 9 and 10, she actually described the platforms 9 and 10 at Euston, not King's Cross. So my Harry and Hermione took the train from Waterloo one of the two station from which trains leave

for Surrey. With no more detailed information in canon, I have chosen Epsom as the location for Privet Drive.

(N2)Clapham Junction is not the busiest in terms of passenger numbers, but has an average of one train passing or stopping every thirteen seconds. Many faster, longer distance trains pass through without stopping. The train Harry and Hermione took from Victoria to Epsom would also have passed through Clapham Junction.

(N3)The Philosopher's Stone FILM says the python was from Burma (even though the snake used was more like one from Brazil. The book says Brazil. I have used Burma here not to follow the film, but simply because Chessington Zoo does have an exhibit with pythons from Burma.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler.

Thanks to The Thirteenth Rose and JJRust, who both spotted the same typo in the previous chapter, now corrected and alix33, who spotted another one.

I also made some corrections in chapters 17 and 19 and re uploaded them.

Please review.

Brian



## Chapter Forty-eight.

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

# The Daily Prophet

## A special NEWSFLASH

by Rita Skeeter

It has come to our notice that the author of this story, Brian Grove, does not own Harry Potter, nor has he ever done so.

You can believe this because you know that I, Rita Skeeter, would never write anything which isn't one hundred percent true.

(N) = See explanatory note below.

In the previous chapter...

Harry and Hermione returned to the Dursleys'.

**\*REMEMBER\*** If you need to refresh your memory on what had happened previously in this story, below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far". "The story so far" also gives the dates covered by each chapter.

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The rest of the visit to the zoo went well and they spent almost all day there, most of which was Harry finding out that he could talk to all the snakes. After a while, Hermione left him talking to the snakes while she explored the rest of the zoo.

It wasn't until it was time to go "home" that Harry discovered the amusement park. Hermione wasn't that interested in it, but Harry said

that he wanted to come back another day to go round the amusement park and go on all the rides.

Seeing Harry less depressed than he had been so far this summer made Hermione agree.

A week later they were being pulled slowly up a long hill, Harry having persuaded a nervous Hermione that the Dragon Falls log flume was nothing like flying. Through the mouth of the dragon and dropping down to a splash and Hermione admitted that it wasn't so bad, but then they began to go up higher again. A long turn and down rapidly until...

Hermione shrieked. "You knew that was coming. I'm soaked."

When he stopped laughing Harry said, "It's not THAT wet. Come on, let's go on the monorail."

"Flying again," she moaned, but followed him anyway. From the monorail, called the Safari Skyway she pointed out many of the animals they had seen the week before.

She'd not seen Harry quite like this for ages. Full of enthusiasm and life, the moment they were off the monorail, he wanted to try the Chessington Railroad. That was a long ride and when they had finished that she persuaded him to stop for something to eat.

At the end of the day, Harry had another go on the Dragon Falls, despite Hermione's warning that he'd have to go home all wet. It didn't bother him.

Sadly for Hermione, it seemed that Harry was hooked on amusement parks. The next week he'd insisted that they visit Thorpe Park, another park not far from them, though it did mean taking three different trains and a bus to get there.

Of course, Harry found another water ride, and persuaded Hermione that it was hot enough to risk getting a bit wet on the Thunder River. Although they did get sprayed, they weren't that wet, so Harry went

straight to another water ride, the tallest log flume in the UK, Logger's Leap.

This time Hermione refused. "I don't like heights," Hermione said.

"Okay," Harry agreed. "You stay here and I'll go on it to show you there's nothing to worry about."

By the time a rather wet Harry came off the Logger's Leap, he was met by a totally drenched Hermione.

"What happened?" he asked, innocently.

"You know what happened," she retorted. "You left me standing in the soak zone."

"Did I?" he asked, trying to look as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. (N)

Hermione's glare was replaced by a grin when Harry added, "You know, we've just got to bring the twins here. And Ron and Ginny."

"Yeah? You soak Ginny and I'm not defending you," she said firmly.

As they were already wet they decided to go on one of the newest rides, just opened that year. Depth Charge claimed to be the "World's First Four Lane Water Slide". Hermione couldn't really get any wetter, but Harry got sprayed quite a bit.

Hermione went into the toilets and came out totally dry, then refused to dry Harry. "There's too many people and I can't use magic out here," she pointed out.

"What do you say for the drying charm?" he asked.

"You'll have to look it up later," she smirked, "just like I did after you got me wet last week."

Hermione then decided they'd go on the Wicked Witch's Haunt, which was a dark ride. Both of them enjoyed that one, particularly as they now had the perspective to see how silly it was.

Later they took the Water Bus to Thorpe Farm and ended up petting some of the animals, returning by the train. The train took them back to Logger's Leap and Harry finally persuaded Hermione to come with him. She insisted that he hold her hand the entire ride though.

When they left the park, Hermione found an area where nobody could see and quickly dried them both.

Despite their days out, both Harry and Hermione found the long summer holidays increasingly boring. They couldn't wait to get back to Hogwarts.

Even though they'd got the twins to owl them some of their special voice-changing biscuits, Mrs. Granger's condition didn't seem to be improving. Some days her brain waves showed an apparent response, but the next time they went, there was nothing.

The biscuits did have another use though. Allowing Dudley to steal one just before he went out with his friends left both Harry and Hermione rolling in laughter wondering what Dudley's friends would make of Dudley talking like a five-year-old girl.

The charm had worn off by the time a very angry Dudley came home. He left them alone for quite a while after that, and was too embarrassed to even tell Vernon about it.

Harry wanted to try the same thing with Vernon, but Hermione said that might be pushing him too far.

Just before Harry's birthday, Hermione had decided that a useful way to pass the holidays would be to go to places of educational interest. "Historical places would be a good idea," she said, "as Professor Binns only ever teaches us about the Goblin Wars. I'd like to see some of the museums in London too."

As the Weasleys were coming up to London to visit Harry for his birthday, Harry had suggested visiting Thorpe Park again. So they met the Weasleys at Waterloo station, which wasn't too far from the Leaky Cauldron.

Arthur Weasley saw the signs for Waterloo International. "Why International?" he asked.

"It's because that where the Eurostar to Paris will go from when it's finished," Hermione explained.

"How does it get across to France? Do they make it float?"

Hermione smiled as she explained that it wouldn't float, it would go in a tunnel under the sea.

"Clever these Muggles, I always said they are clever. Will we be able to go on it to this Four Park place?"

Harry couldn't help a slight snigger. "No, Mr. Weasley. We take an ordinary train to Staines, then a bus to Thorpe Park."

Arthur looked disappointed, but he cheered up once they were on the train and on their way to Staines, though Harry did have to explain to Arthur why they couldn't sit in the first class compartment.

Arthur was disappointed by the bus ride to Thorpe Park, proclaiming that it just wasn't as exciting as the Knight Bus. Ginny disagreed loudly with her father, pointing out that Bill, the only one of them apart from their parents who had ever ridden on the Knight Bus, was sick after being on it. Ron however, said that he'd like to go on it.

Of course once he arrived at Thorpe Park, he was like a child visiting Honeydukes Sweetshop for the first time. Everything was amazing to him. Harry couldn't resist suggesting that he and Hermione show the Weasleys how the Dragon Falls ride worked, then they could go on it.

When they were met by a set of very wet Weasleys at the end of the ride, as of course they had left them standing in the soak zone, the look on the twins face promised revenge, while Ginny and Ron were

amused. Arthur however declared the whole experience was fascinating. After the Weasleys had been on the ride, they went on Thunder River and the junior Weasleys, managed to splash Harry and Hermione as much as possible. Arthur finished the water fight by putting his wand into the water and causing a wave to crash over Harry and Hermione, leaving Hermione's hair plastered over her face. There was no time for them to respond in kind as the ride came to an end.

After they dismounted the boats, Arthur discretely dried himself and the boys in the men's toilets, while Hermione dried herself and Ginny in the ladies'.

The rest of the day was tiring as all the Weasleys wanted to try everything, but before it got dark, Hermione had one last place she wanted to visit.

They took a bus to Staines, then another to Old Windsor. "Why are we standing on a Riverside?" Harry asked.

Hermione pointed to the memorial plaque placed there by the American Bar Association to show its importance not just in British but in world history. "This is Runnymede," she explained. "It's where the Magna Carta was signed in the year twelve fifteen."

They went to the nearby tea room and as they waited for their teas, Hermione took out a book and read... "The effect of Magna Carta over the centuries was to guarantee the liberties of the King's free subjects and to restrict his absolute power... The text of the charter was copied on to the first English Statute Roll in the reign of Edward I and passed into English Law. It has since formed the basis of the constitutions and statutes of many other countries in the English-speaking world, including the United States of America. It underlines the Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which goes well beyond its original purpose as a definition of the limitations of royal power." Then she added, "And the Magna Carta is where we get our Wizengamot Charter of Rights from."

At the slightly blank look from the others, she said, "Well, I just think it's more important than hearing about just goblins. And this place was also where the Witan, also known as the Witenagemot, used to meet in the time of King Arthur and Merlin. The magical part of the Witan eventually became the Wizengamot. The most important ones became the Wizard Council, which later became the Ministry Of Magic."

Even the twins were impressed by her knowledge. "When you've done your NEWTS you should take over from Binns," declared George.

"No!" cried Fred, contradicting his brother, "she'd never let anyone ever get away with sleeping in her classes."

His comment was met with a glare. "And to think," Hermione said, "I almost persuaded Harry not to prank you today."

They went back into Staines and found a restaurant to have a meal. None of the Weasleys had tried Chinese food before, but it was one of Hermione's favourites and Harry had got a taste for it during their trips to London.

Harry and Hermione laughed at Arthur's attempts to eat with chopsticks until he decided to give up and join the others in using knives and forks instead.

When Arthur saw a poster advertising overnight sleeper trains to Devon and Cornwall and was told that it was possible to ride back to Devon on a sleeper train from Reading, which was a short direct train ride from Staines, and sleep in a real bed on the train, he was eager to try it, but when the clerk at Staines station informed him that it would mean getting up very early to get off the train in the morning, Ron and Ginny vigorously persuaded him against the idea, pointing out that it wouldn't be anywhere near as exciting as the beds on the Knight Bus.

Reluctantly he agreed and they all boarded the train back to Waterloo instead. They made their way to the Leaky Cauldron and Arthur

bought them all butterbeers and they drank Harry's health and, for the umpteenth time that day, wished him a happy birthday.

Arthur had arranged for Tom to bring out a cake, and insisted that Harry make a wish as he blew out the candles, reminding him not to tell anyone what his wish was or it wouldn't come true.

Hermione was surprised that the tradition was the same in the wizarding world as in the Muggle world, but none of them would have needed more than one attempt to guess Harry's wish. His slightly sad glance at Hermione told them all.

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When they returned home from the Weasleys' visit, they found that they had another, more unusual visitor. First they saw a long and expensive-looking car parked in the Dursleys' driveway (a big deal for the status-hungry Vernon), then, as they opened the front door as quietly as possible, they hear sounds of cutlery clinking and Vernon talking in the dinning room. The Dursleys were apparently having a dinner with some guests, Vernon being in the middle of one the his rather long and boring jokes, so they sneaked up to their room quietly.

“Who are you?” asked Harry, finding a strange looking creature in their bedroom.

“Harry Potter?”

Harry nodded and the creature began to speak excitedly. “Oh, Harry Potter, what an honour, sir. I'm Dobby, sir. Dobby, the house elf, Sir.”

Hermione asked “What's a house elf?”

Ignoring the question Dobby continued, “I've come to warn the Great Harry Potter that he must not go back to Hogwarts this year.”

“That's ridiculous,” said Hermione.



Dobby looked at her and said, "The Great Harry Potter's Mrs. Potter mustn't go back either."

"Why not?"

"C..C..Cannot say. But awful things are going to happen. Harry Potter must stay home," the strange, fidgety elf said, slowly and with emphasis.

"Hogwarts is my home," Harry insisted. "Tell me what is going to happen."

"Dobby can't."

Harry made a grab for Dobby and he ran out of the door and down the stairs. As they followed, he looked back at Harry and Hermione with an mischievous grin.

The large creamy dessert which Petunia had made suddenly began to rise from it's plate and travel towards the Dursleys' guest. So far neither they, nor the Dursleys had noticed anything.

Hermione took out her wand and quietly cast the "Mobilierbus" spell on the dessert and it began to travel back to its plate. Luckily the man of the guests had said something intended to be funny at that point and the Dursleys had all laughed loudly (and falsely), so her spell wasn't heard by anyone.

Dobby looked at Hermione in surprise and the dessert again began to move away from its plate.

Hermione responded by putting more concentration into her own spell and the cake flew back towards her. Back and forth their magic warred until Dobby realised that he wasn't going to be able to do what he had planned.

With a grin, Dobby disappeared. The sudden lack of his spell meant that the cake flew rapidly at Hermione's face as if it had been thrown, pushing her into the sitting room and splattering all over her, the floor and the tea table behind her. There she was left, sitting on the cake-

covered tea table, in plain view from the dinning table and gasping through a full face of wiped cream.

“Harry Potter,” Vernon screamed, assuming that Harry had thrown it at Hermione. “Get out of wherever you are hiding, clean that up and get back in your room.” Vernon then turned to his guests to explain that they were temporarily looking after their nephew, who was rather disturbed, having hit his head in a car accident when he was a baby.

Then he turned to Hermione, who had finished wiping the cream from her face and got up. “And you girl. Weren’t you supposed to be keeping him quiet upstairs? ”

“I tried, you know!” Hermione replied, deciding to play along, for now, on Vernon’s bullshit about Harry being subnormal. “Hard to do when we entered and saw that cake.”

Hermione ran upstairs after whispering to Harry a very quiet “Play along!” while Harry went to the cleaning cupboard, his old bedroom, for the things to he needed clean up the mess, without magic, as the guests were still there.

And he did ‘play along’, just to spite his uncle. Having read ‘The Hobbit’ little more than a year ago, he decided to play a cheerful and watered-down Gollum while he cleaned.

That night he insisted Hermione had to enter his mind and see the memory. They giggled for quite some time reliving how Vernon tried to act like Harry’s actions were normal while inwardly he was completely appalled. It only got worse for him when he noticed that the guests, a Mr. & Mrs. Mason, seemed to be far more entertained by watching Harry wiggle his fingers at the couch than by his best Japanese golfer joke.

Still, nothing better than the memory of Vernon’s face after Mrs. Mason gushed at Harry on her way out, or how Mr. Mason had stopped to ruffle his hair before turning to Vernon and cheerfully telling him “Let’s talk shop at your office tomorrow, but I think we have a deal.”

And having been quite a while since the last time they had shared a bed while feeling cheerful, they felt confident enough to do it again.

After all, a victory on the Dursley front was quite a victory.

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In the following few weeks Hermione took them both to the British Museum, where they actually saw one of the remaining copies of the Magna Carta. Hermione insisted on stopping off in Diagon Alley to find a book on House Elves. Other days they visited the Science Museum and Biggin Hill, the famous wartime air base. They also visited Epsom racecourse and the All England Lawn Tennis Club at Wimbledon as well as Kew Gardens, to which Harry's only comment was, "Wouldn't Neville love it here?"

Much to Hermione's amusement, Harry insisted on them visiting Wimbledon Common, just to see if the Wombles were real. They didn't find any.

In mid-August they visited Diagon Alley and met up with the Weasleys again. Harry was annoyed at what he insisted on calling "That idiot Lockhart", who dragged him to the front in Flourish & Blotts for a photo for the Daily Prophet. He was even more annoyed when "the idiot" announced that he was to be their new teacher for Defence Against the Dark Arts. What was even more irritating for Harry was that Hermione seemed to think he was "quite nice" and went slightly pink when she said it.

The last couple of weeks in August, they went several times to the seafront at Brighton. The first time they forgot their swimsuits, so Harry cheekily suggested that they go to the famous nude beach instead. Hermione's reaction was "Harry Potter, if you think I'm parading up and down naked in front of everyone..." She stopped as she realised that Harry was laughing at her. "You..." she muttered, as he led her into a clothes shop.

Before their return to Hogwarts, Harry also insisted on one final visit to Thorpe Park and Chessington.

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Finally it was September the first and time to take the Hogwarts Express again. They went up to London early enough that they could quickly visit Mrs. Granger, even though it was really before the official visiting hours. Harry's wish hadn't come true, her condition hadn't changed a bit.

Seeing their friends from Hufflepuff and Neville and the Weasleys again, especially Ginny's excitement as she boarded the train for the first time cheered them up a lot.

To their surprise, Harry and Hermione couldn't get onto the platform. Ron came back out to find out what was wrong and suggested they use the car his father had enchanted.

"No way," said Hermione firmly. "You go back and tell your father. He'll know what to do." As Ron reluctantly returned to the platform, she added, "I wonder why we can't get through?"

She didn't have time to wonder for long as Arthur Weasley came back out. "The train has gone. You two come with me to the Leaky Cauldron and I'll speak to Professor Dumbledore from there."

After a short floo call, Harry and Hermione floored into Professor Dumbledore's office, the headmaster being as mystified as anyone else at their inability to access platform nine and three-quarters.

He even made them cast a simple spell to check that they were still magical. They were. It was a strange lunch for Harry and Hermione, just them sitting with the teachers all at one table. Professor Snape glared at them and several times seemed about to make some sort of comment, but each time Professor Sprout turned her own glare on him. She and the other teachers seemed most interested in all they had done over the holidays.

When the rest of the students arrived on the train, it came as no surprise to anyone that Ginny was sorted into Gryffindor, though Harry said she'd make a perfect Slytherin.

“Professor” Lockhart was as useless in class as Harry had expected. Even Hermione admitted that she was disappointed in him and had already found quite a few inconsistencies between his books.

As Hermione's birthday approached, she seemed to become sadder and would not tell Harry what was wrong.

It was Susan Bones who finally pointed out to Harry, "It's her first birthday ever without her parents."

Harry felt bad that he hadn't thought of it himself, till Susan informed him that he was a boy. As Hermione said, most boys had the emotional range of a teaspoon.

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Hermione's birthday was on a Saturday, so Harry got permission to take Hermione to visit her mother at the hospital.

They entered the sterile, quiet, semi-dark room as gently as they could. The pale yellow curtains which blocked out most of the mid-afternoon's light were almost completely closed. Holding Hermione's hand, Harry led them over to her mother's bedside near the window. Harry felt a powerful tug on his heart as he looked down at the woman he had called 'Mum' for so long. She looked peaceful, but gaunt.

Hermione noticed that the skin on her mother's face looked like it hadn't had a good facial in a very long while, nor felt the touch of her favourite lipstick for many, many months. Reaching down, Hermione took her mothers' hand and pressed it against the side of her face. It was a small gesture, but it hurt Harry a very great deal. He knew how much Hermione loved and needed their mother.

How long they stood holding their mother's hands, Harry was unsure. Eventually though, Harry sensed that Hermione needed some time alone with her mother, so he left them for a while. When he returned, Hermione had obviously been crying. She got up and left the room and went to the nearest toilet.

Harry sat beside Mrs. Granger, almost as upset as Hermione was. He took her hand and said, "I'm so sorry."

Feeling overcome with emotion, he started to get up, but felt his hand gripped . He turned back to see Mrs. Granger's eyes open and weakly looking up at him. Even though she was weak, he could see a flash of anger in her eyes. "No," she said in a barely audible hoarse voice.

"What?"

"No!" she repeated. "Not your fault." She struggled to lift her head and suddenly the machine's alarm went off as her body began to convulse.

A nurse came running to her and immediately called out, "Call the crash team."

"Is she for resus?" came the slightly surprised reply from the nurse at the desk. (N2)

Before the nurse could answer, Harry snapped, "Of course she is."

He found himself pushed away as several other nurses and some doctors came rushing in.

One of the nurses took him outside. "You don't need to see this," she said quietly.

Harry pushed her away and ran headlong down the hall and around the corner letting their Bond help him find Hermione.

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Author's notes...

Sorry! Couldn't resist the cliffie.

(N)The phrase "Butter wouldn't melt in someone's mouth" means that someone is very innocent and naive. Try to look like that means they are trying to look innocent.

(N2)"resus". The nurse is asking if Mrs. Granger is to be resuscitated or not.

Can anyone spot the two deliberate errors? Note that the Chessington Railroad closed down a few years later, in 1996, so you won't find it on maps of the Chessington World of Adventures now. That wasn't the error. Thunder River was redesigned and renamed as the Ribena Rumba Rapids in 2002 and is now called simply Rumba Rapids. The Wicked Witch's Haunt was destroyed by fire in 2000. Thorpe Farm closed in 2007 due to lack of visitors.

TheElementalMaster informs me that Logger's Leap at Thorpe Park doesn't have a Splash zone (Tidal Wave does, but that wasn't open then). I confess I was fairly sure it didn't, but couldn't resist adding it, so add that as another deliberate mistake.

The text Hermione read from is taken from the National Trust page on the Magna Carta in their section on Runnymede.

You may be wondering why they don't get into trouble for using magic around the Dursleys, after all that was one of the charges against Harry in canon in book five. This was actually an error(?) on Fudge's part (or JKR's part?) as the law was against using magic in the presence of Muggles who don't know about the magical world. Of course they would still get into trouble for using magic while under-age, but their bond makes them legally adults.

Thanks to Arkenstone007 and my beta omega13a for spotting an error which I added AFTER the chapter had been beta'd. A speaker of parseltongue is a parselMOUTH. It is now corrected.

Thanks also to JJ Rust for spotting another typo, now corrected.

I also corrected a minor typo in chapter 9 and made a minor change in chapter 7.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler.

Please review.

Brian



## Chapter Forty-nine.

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

# The Quibbler

# UNPRECEDENTED NEWS - THE PROPHET TELLS THE TRUTH

by Luna Lovegood

We were surprised to read recently that the Daily Prophet told the truth in a story – Brian Grove does not own Harry Potter. Why Rita Skeeter should suddenly change the habit of a lifetime is a mystery that needs to be investigated. Perhaps the Minister is using heliopaths to control her?

But surely everyone already knew that Harry Potter is really owned by the Weasley twins, also known as Gred and Forge, in their battle to take over the wizarding world?

(N) = See explanatory note below.

In the previous chapter...

The rest of Harry and Hermione's summer, the return to Hogwarts and a dramatic visit to the hospital.

**\*REMEMBER\*** If you need to refresh your memory on what had happened previously in this story, below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far". "The story so far" also gives the dates covered by each chapter.

[illegible]

From the previous chapter...

Harry sat beside Mrs. Granger, almost as upset as Hermione was. He took her hand and said, "I'm so sorry."

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"Is she for resus?" came the slightly surprised reply from the nurse at the desk.

Before the nurse could answer, Harry snapped, "Of course she is."

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Harry found Hermione outside the hospital in the square. The moment she saw his stricken face she asked "What's happened?"

Harry tried to explain, but no words would come out. Hermione ran past him into the hospital with Harry running after her.

Ignoring the shouts of a hospital porter not to run inside the hospital, they ran up the stairs, quicker than waiting for the lift, and arrived quickly at Mrs. Granger's bedside.

What they saw was just like a scene from casualty, various people in white coats around her, all of whom seemed to be busy with something.

"Clear!" said a voice, then, "Someone, get those kids out of here!"

Harry and Hermione found themselves pushed back and heard again, "Clear!"

The next few minutes were a nightmare as instruction after instruction was called out in rapid succession. Despite all Hermione's reading on her mother's condition, nothing had prepared her for this. Harry and Hermione sat at the Nurses' station holding hands, waiting for someone to bring them any news.

A kindly volunteer asked if they'd like some tea (N), but neither Harry nor Hermione even heard her.

By the time a man in a white coat came to see them, Hermione was sitting on Harry's lap and they were clinging to each other.

"Are you Mrs. Granger's children?" he asked.

Harry said "Yes," while Hermione just nodded, not trusting herself to speak.

"Is there anyone here with you?"

"No."

"Okay. Perhaps we should go somewhere more comfortable?"

"Just tell us," Hermione begged.

"Your mother survived..."

Hermione felt her muscles relax and she almost fell off Harry's lap.

"Do you know what a seizure is?"

Hermione replied, "Yes."

"Well you're mother had a strong seizure, strong enough to disrupt the signals that come from the brain to the heart. We managed to bring the convulsions under control and get the heart beating regularly again. As you saw for yourself, I won't pretend that it was easy, the convulsions she had were quite strong."

"Why did it happen?" Hermione asked.

"We don't know. But it is not unheard of, especially after a brain injury."

"She was trying to talk," Harry said. "She grabbed my hand..."

Hermione looked at him, partly with shock, but also with more than a little hurt that it had been Harry and not her that her mother had tried to talk to.

"She was angry with me," Harry explained. "I said something that made her angry," he finished, guiltily.

"I'm sure that's not really true," the doctor said. "The important thing is that she is peaceful now. She's under sedation for now."

"Can we see her?" Hermione asked, standing up and looking anxious.

"Yes. Of course."

"If she did have a reaction to something Harry said, that's a good sign isn't it?"

"I don't want to get your hopes up," the doctor replied, "but, yes, it's possibly a good sign. The nurse will take you to her now."

They followed the nurse, who had been standing behind the doctor unnoticed by both Harry and Hermione, back to their mother's bed.

She looked like she was just sleeping peacefully, no sign to show the drama that had just happened, apart from an increased number of machines attached to her and a drip running into one of her arms.

"Mum?" said Hermione, even though she knew there could be no reply.

After a few minutes sitting at their mother's bedside, Harry said, haltingly, "I was saying I was sorry," he began. "She told me... She told me it wasn't my fault."

Hermione looked at Harry, a shocked look on her face. "Of course it wasn't," she said firmly.

Neither of them spoke any more. They just sat beside the bed, each deep in their own thoughts until they were interrupted.

"Hermione? Harry? Are you both all right? I came to find out why you hadn't returned and the nurse told me..."

Professor Sprout's words were cut off by Hermione flying at her and grasping her in a hug and crying over her.

A rather surprised professor simply returned the hug and stroked Hermione's hair. "I can bring you both back tomorrow if you like."

Hermione nodded.

Back at Hogwarts, the other Hufflepuffs had organised a birthday party for Hermione, as they did for everyone in their house. Ron had been heard to comment that with so many birthday parties and so much extra food for all the parties, he wished he'd been sorted into Hufflepuff. When Harry had "accidentally" let slip that the entrance to the kitchens was near to the Hufflepuff common room, Ron had almost demanded a re-sorting!

Hermione forced herself to be sociable but couldn't really get into the party mood. She had come close to losing her mother today, she knew, but at the same time, it was a tremendous breakthrough. She could barely wait for what tomorrow might bring. Nobody was surprised when both she and Harry left the party early and each went to bed.

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The following morning found Harry and Hermione in the Hufflepuff common room, fast asleep on one of the big comfortable cushions, Harry's arms wrapped around Hermione. Neither of them had been able to sleep and shortly after midnight had come down to the common room.

Immediately after breakfast, Professor Sprout walked over to Hermione. "Tell me when you want to leave and we'll go. I would be honoured if you will let me come with you."

Hermione actually managed a smile. "Thank you. And thank you for yesterday, in the hospital."

"You're welcome," the professor said with a smile. "You may be an adult legally, but any Hufflepuff student is my child while you are here." She didn't mention that she still tended to think of Hufflepuff students as "her children" long after they had left Hogwarts for the adult world.

"Will half an hour be okay?" Hermione asked.

"Certainly. Meet me outside the headmaster's office."

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Half an hour later, Professor Dumbledore welcomed them into his office and for once in his life seemed unsure what to say.

"Good luck to you both. I hope..."

“Thank you, Headmaster,” Hermione replied.

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The ward was busier on a Sunday, many relatives of long-term patients taking the opportunity of a day off from work to come to visit.

All the additional machinery that had been installed the previous day was still there. The twins had given them their special biscuits, promising that they had labelled which was which correctly this time (frequently during the summer they had “accidentally” mixed them up,) but Harry decided that they'd leave the biscuits until the afternoon.

Their mother's condition seemed the same as it always had. Mid afternoon, one of the nurses came around to disconnect the extra equipment that had been left attached for twenty-four hours “observation” after her attack. “I hoped that after yesterday, there might have been some change,” Hermione said to her.

The nurse smiled understandingly. “She was given a lot of drugs to sedate her and prevent more convulsions. It will be a few days before they are completely out of her system.”

“And then she'll be all right?” asked Harry, unable to keep the eagerness from his voice.

The nurse's face gave them the answer she would verbalise. “You really need to ask the doctors about that,” she said.

It was a new doctor, so he was hesitant to answer Hermione until Professor Sprout, who had loyally stayed with them on and off for most of the day asked him to be frank with them.

“There's not a lot I can say,” he admitted. “The convulsions, and we don't really know what caused them, caused a rise in pressure inside her brain.”

"That can cause coning, can't it?" asked Hermione. (N2)

The Doctor looked very surprised at her knowledge. "Yes, but as you can see from the fact that's she's breathing without assistance, it didn't. But we don't know if it has caused any other damage."

"Isn't there any hope?" asked Harry, desperately.

The Doctor turned and smiled. "Yes, there is some. While we won't know what damage might have been done until the sedatives are out of her system, I can say that her brain waves seem to show that there is more brain activity than before."

Hermione looked thoughtful, while Professor Sprout was concerned to notice that Harry had that look which she had come to learn meant that he was blaming himself.

Rather than returning directly to Hogwarts, Professor Sprout took them to the Leaky Cauldron for their evening meal, then to Fortescue's for some ice cream to try to cheer them up. It was clear that it was going to take more than a little work and an ice cream to get them back to a reasonable state of mind.

As they were eating, the professor thought to herself that Hermione's birthday weekend hadn't been as happy as she would have liked, which was an understatement, and tried to think what she could do to try to ensure that the two children had at least as happy a Christmas as was possible under the circumstances.

After flooing back to Hogwarts Hermione and Harry were immediately accosted by Susan and Hannah in their common room asking how their mother was.

The girls went to their dorm, Hannah giving Hermione a shoulder to cry on, leaving Harry in the common room.

To his surprise Ernie Macmillan came and sat near him. "Er... Harry mate," he began hesitantly. "I don't know much about Muggle hospitals an' comas an' stuff. Justin says it sounds like she could've died..."



Harry turned and snapped at him, "So?"

Keeping his eyes down, Ernie replied. "Well, it's just I know how I'd feel if it was my mum."

"No, you don't," Harry said angrily and loudly. "You have no idea."

"Okay, I don't. But if you need anyone to talk to, like Hermione has Susan and Hannah..." He turned to go.

"Ernie, don't go," Harry called. "Sorry I shouted at you. I'm just so... angry."

"S'okay mate. Better me than Mione, right?"

That brought a smile to Harry's face. "And better me being angry than HERmione if she hears you call her that."

"You okay?"

"I'm fine," Harry replied, knowing that Ernie would believe him even if those who knew him better would not. "I'm going to see if Ron wants a game of chess."

"You can't get in the G-Tower, can you?"

"The what?"

"Justin calls it that, says it's like G-spot."

"What a G-spot?"

Ernie shrugged. "Dunno. He said something to do with girls."

Harry made his way from the cellars towards the Gryffindor Tower, but passing the big front doors he thought he heard something.

Hesitatingly, he crept out of the doors. "Is there anybody there?" he called.

There was no answer. "Is there anybody there?" he called again, a little louder this time.

Still no answer. He walked down the wide steps to look around. He saw nobody, so he turned to go back indoors. As he did so, in the corner between the doors and the nearest window, he saw someone.

The person was small, smaller than average even for a first year. He or she was sitting silently with their arms wrapped around their knees and their head resting on their knees. Almost covered with a school cloak, but barefoot, and without a heavier outdoor coat of any kind, he or she was shaking with the cold. Harry was able to see the skin on the stranger's elbows and knees and wondered if he or she was even wearing a robe under the cloak.

"Are you okay?" he asked, mentally kicking himself for asking something so silly.

There was no reply, so he touched whoever it was on the shoulder. A young girl's head jerked up, long, blond hair spilling out of the cloak's hood. Her face was dirty with tears and she looked frightened, ready to run.

"I'm Harry," Harry said. "I'm not going to hurt you." He touched her cheek. It was cold. "You're freezing," he said. "We need to get you back inside."

"I'm okay," the girl replied. "I like it out here."

"What were you doing out here anyway?"

"Just walking in the forest."

"The Forbidden Forest?"

"It's not ALL dangerous," the girl insisted, "if you know where to go."

"But you've got no shoes on! Why did you go all that way?"

“They took my clothes and shoes while I was having a bath. But I really wanted to see the Thestrals, so I took this cloak. I'll put it back later.”

“The what?”

“Thestrals. They're like skinny horses, but they have skin like a reptile and they can fly and most people can't see them.”

“Why did you want to see them tonight? It's really cold tonight.”

“I usually like to see them at the full moon. But tonight was the first night without clouds.”

Not sure what to make of this strange girl, Harry simply repeated, “You ought to come inside. “You'll catch your death.”

“They don't like me inside,” the girl replied.

“Why not?”

“They think I'm weird,” she said, sadly.

For a moment Harry was very tempted to agree with whoever “they” were. “You're really cold. Come inside. I can find Madam Pomfrey or a teacher and they can get you a hot drink to warm you up.” He tried to pull the girl up, and in a heart-wrenching moment he confirmed his suspicions that the girl indeed wasn't wearing a stitch of clothing under the cloak.

The girl pulled away from his arms, but didn't react adversely when he took off his own cloak and put it around her shoulders. “Thank you,” she said. “But no staff. It'll only make things worse.”

“Okay. No staff. I can get us in the kitchens. You ought to have a hot drink at least.”

“I'm a bit hungry,” the girl admitted. “I couldn't find my clothes to go down for dinner. Do you think there'll be some pudding?”

Something about the way she asked that made Harry smile. "I'm sure of it."

To his surprise, on the kitchen table was a hot meal, including pudding and two large mugs of tea. The girl, he still hadn't found out her name, ate as though she was ravenous and Harry didn't like to interrupt her.

Who was she? Obviously a first year, and a lonely one at that. Too bad the school cloaks don't come in house colours. Harry thought she might be another Muggleborn in Slytherin, but surely people would have noticed if that had happened. Anyhow, she'd said about going DOWN to dinner, so that meant either Ravenclaw or Gryffindor. Thinking about how Hermione had been treated by the "claws", Harry knew which he'd put money on.

He was still unable to ask her when she'd finished eating as the girl had fallen asleep, her head almost falling into the bowl in front of her.

He couldn't leave her here in the kitchen to get into trouble, so, shaking her to try to wake her, he found that he couldn't wake her properly, she was slurring like someone drunk. He managed to help her to stand and half walked, half carried her to the Hufflepuff common room.

Exhausted he sat her down in one of the couches facing the central fire and sat next to her. He'd just rest for a minute or two, they carry her to his dorm to sleep properly. He would then come back to sleep down here, and his dorm-mates wouldn't tell on her.

The girl was obviously as tired as he was as she gone right back to sleep. She had fallen against him; her face resting on his shoulder and an arm around him. The last thing Harry would remember of the night was thinking that he must get her up from here before everyone sees them.

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Author's notes...

(N)TEA. It used to be an old joke in hospitals, especially Casualty units (Emergency Rooms) that if you were offered tea by the staff, it meant your relative had died. Sadly, it was often true although less so nowadays. A cup of tea (or cuppa) is traditionally the answer to calming someone down and coping in a crisis.

After the London Bombings on 7th July 2005, "The Times" newspaper said, "Britain is at its best when it demonstrates, in its daily routine and lives, the values of humour, moderation, reasonableness and imperturbability." These characteristics were showcased in the Internet-circulated list of quotes gathered from Londoners in the wake of the bombings.

When the news reporter said "Shopkeepers are opening their doors bringing out blankets and cups of tea" I just smiled. It's like yes. That's Britain for you. Tea solves everything.

You're a bit cold?

Tea.

Your boyfriend has just left you?

Tea.

You've just been told you've got cancer?

Tea.

Coordinated terrorist attack on the transport network bringing the city to a grinding halt?

TEA DAMMIT!

My kettle broke. We had to go and buy a new one. You can't have a national emergency without tea and the one time I tried to boil water in a saucepan, I spilt it all over the floor.

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(N2)Coning – The brain stem, at the bottom of the brain, where the nerves converge into the spinal cord, is the part of the brain responsible for things like breathing and heart function. Coning is when pressure within the skull, usually from bleeding within the brain, forces the brain stem down into the spine, basically crushing it. This causes brain death and is irreversible.

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Did anyone spot the two deliberate errors? There was no “Soak Zone” in the Dragon Falls ride. That came in with the Tidal Wave ride in the year 2000. Also the soak zone is clearly marked so Harry would have problems fooling Hermione. The other “error” is that until 1994 when the ride was re-themed the Wicked Witch's Haunt was called Phantom Fantasia.

A non-deliberate error was the phrase saying that the Magna Carta “has since formed the basis of the constitutions and statues of many other countries”. While there may be statues about it for all I know, the word should have been statuTes (i.e. laws). Thanks to ghostchicken for spotting that one.

Thanks to EvilFaerie17 for spotting another typo, now corrected.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler.

Please review.

Brian

## Chapter Fifty.

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies dot com)

Announcement – a new page to help readers and authors to understand British terms and references and authors to avoid Americanisms in stories set in Britain. “[thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural](http://thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural)” or go to the DOTCOM domain “[thesiteofbrian](http://thesiteofbrian)” and use the link there.

If you think of any terms or words I can add, or “Britishisms” which need explaining, please let me know.

“Hey! Fred!”

“What, George?”

“Did you 'ear what Loony said about us owning Harry Potter?”

“Yeah, well. She'll believe anything.”

“An' she said Brian doesn't own him.”

“Well?”

“Isn't he owned by some bird in Scotland?”

“Not forgetting that big company owned by that Aussie bloke.”

“Right. We do all the work.”

“Lee Jordan does most of it.”

“Okay, We do all the research to develop new products and they get all the dosh.”

“That's 'cos they own us.”

**“It sucks.”**

“Yeah. We ought to tell the press.”

“Nah, wouldn't work.”

## “Why not, George?”

"It's true, so The Prophet would never print it, and it's so crazy that even Loony won't believe it.

“True, George, too true. Hey do you think the Ministry'd make an exception if we AK'd the Aussie bloke to get our dosh back?”

In the previous chapter...

## A return visit to the hospital and Harry makes friends.

**\*REMEMBER\*** If you need to refresh your memory on what had happened previously in this story, below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far". "The story so far" also gives the dates covered by each chapter.

[illegible]

Very early Monday morning, Hannah heard Hermione quietly crying in her bed. “What’s up?”

"I nearly lost her yesterday," Hermione sobbed. "What if I had? I'd be all alone."

"Well, you didn't. And anyway, you've got Harry."

Hermione's face brightened at the thought. "I'm too awake to go back to sleep. I think I'll go and study for a while."

Hannah smirked. “Yeah, like you really need to.”



Pulling a face at her friend, Hermione quickly dressed and walked into the common room. Her cry of shock brought Hannah running, quickly followed by quite a few of the other Hufflepuffs.

Harry was fast asleep on the sofa, but he wasn't alone. A blonde girl was laying with him, and the way both her and Harry's cloaks had slipped, it looked like she wasn't wearing much underneath.

Harry jumped up, falling onto the floor, accidentally pulling the cloaks with him as he fell, confirming that the girl wasn't wearing anything at all underneath the cloaks.

"What are you doing?" Hermione nearly screamed.

Harry was frantically trying to untangle himself from the cloaks so he could cover the girl.

"I... er... I found her outside, last night. She was cold." Even Harry could realise how lame that sounded.

"So you brought her in like a stray dog?" Hermione asked. Her initial shock and anger had turned to amusement as she saw the look of embarrassment rather than guilt on his face. Much to her growing annoyance, Harry still tended to think of her as a sister and she didn't think he took much notice of other girls in a romantic way either. She was determined not to show her amusement though. "And what did you do with her clothes?"

"I... er..."

The young girl, who seemed to have woken at Hermione's louder-than-necessary tone of voice said, "I didn't have them." She casually wrapped one of the cloaks around her as Hermione looked her over. She didn't seem embarrassed in the slightest that so many of the Hufflepuffs had just seen her naked.

"They stole her clothes," explained Harry.

"Who did?" Hermione asked solicitously, "And who are you?"

From behind Hermione a voice answered her. "That's Loony Lovegood," said Justin. "Her father runs that crazy paper The Quibbler."

One of the girls proceeded to elbow Justin in the ribs, muttering something about that not being nice.

"Quibbler," replied "Loony", "and it's not crazy."

The girl looked hurt at the nickname Justin had called her and his comment, so Hermione asked. "What's your real name?"

"Luna. Luna Lovegood."

"Who stole your clothes?"

"They didn't really steal them," Luna replied. "They just like to play jokes and hide them. It was nice of Harry to rescue me, almost like having a friend." She got up. "I've got the wrong cloak." She slipped off the cloak she had around her and took the one from Harry and put it on oblivious to the looks from the Hufflepuffs, especially the male Hufflepuffs. This time Hermione noticed how thin Luna was and was about to comment on it, when Luna said suddenly, "I have to get back before they find out I've borrowed this. I expect I'll see you at breakfast."

One of the boys called out, "Will we see more of you?"

That brought half a smile to Luna's face. "You couldn't really see more of me, could you? At least, not until I grow a bit."

And leaving the boy with a slightly red face, with that remark she left before Hermione or anyone else could ask her more questions.

Harry was still worried about Hermione's reaction, but Hermione didn't seem angry. Her face looked haunted if anything.

Susan also noticed the odd look on her friend's face. "Are you all right?" she asked.

Hermione barely whispered, "Almost like having a friend."

Susan thought for a second, then said, "Hannah, Ernie, with me. No, Justin, you stay here." She stepped out through the door, a slightly bewildered Hannah and Ernie following her.

"Susan. What are we doing?"

"Getting Luna," she replied in a determined voice, "and bringing her back here."

They were almost to the Great Hall when they caught up with her. "Luna! Wait!" Susan called.

The girl looked around but didn't say anything.

"Come back with us. At least let us lend you some clothes."

"It's okay," Luna relied almost tonelessly. "I can manage."

"You have to come back," quipped Ernie. "You wouldn't want your rescuer cross with us."

The girl looked almost disappointed. "Harry Potter sent you?"

Susan replied, "No. But he knows we've come to get you."

"Okay," Luna said almost back in more usual dreamy voice. She followed them back to Hufflepuff.

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For a moment all conversation in the Great Hall stopped when Luna entered, following Harry and Hermione and flanked by Susan, Hannah, Ernie and Justin.

Under the usual black cloak, but clearly visible, Luna was wearing one of the Hufflepuff yellow and black ties and around her neck was a Hufflepuff scarf. She was also absent-mindedly playing with her hair,

which was tied up in pigtails with black and yellow ribbons interlaced into them.

Harry and Hermione led her to the Hufflepuff table and made her sit down between them.

There was a lot of loud whispering and they could all hear some of the Ravensclaws mutter the word "traitor". Draco Malfoy called out "Another one who can't make it in their own house, so end up a Puff as the Puffs take any old rubbish."

Harry began to get up to reply, but Luna took his arm and said, "It doesn't matter." Harry strongly disagreed, but Luna seemed quite distressed at the thought of a confrontation that he gave in and sat back down, to much laughter from the Slytherins.

Hermione got up and went to the staff table. "Professor Dumbledore. Could we see you when breakfast is over, in your office, please?"

Trying to hide his surprise, he said, "Just before lunch would be more convenient, if it's all the same to you."

Realising that it would be pushing it a bit to argue, she nodded. "Perhaps Professor Flitwick and Professor Sprout could join us too." She turned to Professor Flitwick with anger in her eyes. "Just tell your eagles to keep their claws in until then."

Professor Flitwick stood up and put his wand to his throat. "At the end of this meal, all Ravensclaws will stay here," his voice boomed across the hall. Ending the spell he turned to Luna. "That does not include you, Miss Lovegood. Please go with your friends."

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When breakfast was over, the Ravensclaws gathered around Professor Flitwick. "I don't know what's going on, though I have a very good idea. I will be seeing Miss Lovegood later today. If I hear of anything happening to her this morning, I will have the whole house

on detention every night for the rest of this term, do I make myself clear?”

There was a mumbled response so he spoke again. “I said. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, Professor Flitwick,” the Ravenclaws answered together.

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If Professor Dumbledore was surprised to see Harry, Hermione and Luna were accompanied by Susan, Hannah, Ernie and Justin when they arrived at his office shortly before lunch, he did a good job of hiding his surprise..

He could see that the group of Hufflepuffs had apparently adopted the first year Ravenclaw, Miss Lovegood. He could also see that she was very nervous at the thought of appearing before not just her head of house, Professor Flitwick, and Professor Sprout, head of Hufflepuff, but Professor McGonagall, who was there in her capacity of Deputy Headmistress (also responsible for discipline) and Professor Dumbledore himself. “No need to be nervous, my dear,” he said. “Sherbet Lemon?” he offered her a sweet from the bag in his hand..

“Thank you,” she mumbled as she took one and popped it in her mouth.

He went on to offer the others the same sweets. Harry reached out for one, but Hermione slapped his hand away.

“Now, I assume this is about Ms. Lovegood, so perhaps you, Professor Flitwick, would like to begin?”

“Actually, Professor,” Susan said quickly, “this was our idea, not hers.”

“Really?” asked Professor Sprout.

“We think Luna should be re-sorted, like Hermione was.”

"And why is that?"

"She's being bullied and harassed in Ravenclaw and it's not right. And she's got no friends there."

"Is that true, Miss Lovegood?" Professor Flitwick asked.

Luna attempted to speak, but could only mumble as her mouth was still full of the sherbet lemon.

"Luna. Can you roll up your sleeve?" Hermione asked.

Luna looked embarrassed and didn't do so.

"She doesn't want to get anyone in trouble," Hermione explained.

"Luna," said Professor Flitwick, softly, "please roll up your sleeve."

She did as she was requested.

"She's that thin because she's hardly eaten in the three weeks we've been here."

"Why?" asked Professor McGonagall, obviously startled by the revelation.

"Because they keep hiding her clothes so she can't come down into meals."

Luna finally managed to swallow what was left of the sweet.

"Is this true?" asked Professor Flitwick.

"Well, yes, but it's only a game," she answered. "I get them back in time for class."

"That's not the point. I won't have anyone bullied."

"It's not bullying really," Luna replied. "They just don't like me."

"Why's that, Luna?" her head of house asked.

"They think I'm weird."

"They call her Loony Lovegood," said Justin, conveniently forgetting that he had called her that only a few hours earlier.

"And Harry found her outside with nothing on last night," said Ernie. "Well, apart from a cloak," he added, reluctantly.

"She was freezing," Harry said. "They'd taken all her clothes while she was in the shower. She had to borrow a cloak."

"Why were you outside?" Professor Sprout asked Luna.

"Well, I wanted to see the Thestrals..."

"And?" the professor asked, sensing that there was more to come.

"They didn't want me in the tower," Luna admitted quietly.

"Why not?"

"The first and second years were playing hide and seek. They said I'd get in the way."

"This is intolerable," said Professor Sprout.

Professor Flitwick looked somewhere between ready to explode and ready to cry.

Hermione spoke up, almost in tears as well. "She said that when Harry rescued her, it was almost like having a friend."

"Albus. I think we need another resorting," Professor McGonagall said firmly.

"I am inclined to agree," Professor Dumbledore said, sadly. He reached up and took down the sorting hat and put it on Luna's head.

"I've already sorted this one," the hat said.

"It appears that she must be resorted. She is being bullied in Ravenclaw," said Professor Dumbledore.

"That isn't my problem," the hat argued. "That's for her head of house to sort out. She is clearly a Ravenclaw."

"Even though she doesn't fit in there?" snapped Harry, angrily. "But then, that doesn't matter to you, does it? You put Hermione in Slytherin, even though there's NO WAY Slytherin would ever have chosen a Muggleborn."

"I'll have you know that I wasn't enchanted by Slytherin. His time in the school was past by the time I was given life," the hat replied, somewhat aloof. "When Godric took me from his head to cast the enchantments on me, he cast the character preferences of the four founders. He refused to instill what he called, 'the unmitigated bigotry of the fourth'. Miss Granger fits the characteristics most desired by Slytherin. That is why I sorted her there."

"Then why can't anyone remember any other Muggleborns in Slytherin?" Hermione countered. "Are you trying to make us believe that no other Muggleborns have ever been ambitious?"

"In almost a thousand years, I have seen and forgotten more than even your headmaster, or his headmaster before him, so watch your tone with me, insolent girl!" the hat snapped. "But no, I hadn't sorted any Muggleborns into Slytherin Until now, Muggleborns came here with no knowledge of our world, left their families for the first time to enter a totally new world to them. That required immense courage. That is why, unless they were exceptionally studious or loyal, I placed Muggleborns in Gryffindor. You have lived with and studied our world for the last few years. It didn't require the same sort of courage for you to come here. You'd already changed things for other Muggleborns before you came here. You plan to work to improve the rights and position of yourself and other Muggleborns. To change the wizarding world like that is great ambition, and that is why I placed you in Slytherin."



“And refused to change her, even though she was being bullied? Just like you are now with Luna?” Harry argued.

“Mr. Potter. You are under a misapprehension. I am not here to do what is best for the individual student, at least not only that. I have a responsibility to do what is best for Hogwarts.”

“How is letting someone get bullied best for Hogwarts?” Susan retorted.

The hat turned back towards Harry. “I cannot truly see the future, but I know that danger is coming which will threaten the very existence of Hogwarts. It will only survive if the houses are united. You, Mr. Potter, are at the centre of what is to come. You need allies in every house.”

Most of the others there looked at Harry in surprise at the hat's words. They were even more surprised to see that Harry and Hermione did not look surprised at all.

“If Harry needs me there, then I must stay in Ravenclaw,” Luna said simply.

“This all sounds like divination to me,” said Professor McGonagall with some disdain. “She should be put in Hufflepuff or Gryffindor.”

“No, thank you, Professor,” replied Luna. “I will stay where I am needed.”

“Luna,” said Professor Flitwick. “I apologise for how you have been treated in my house. I should have noticed.”

“Yes,” replied Luna, back in her usual, more dreamy voice. “You should.”

Harry added, “Especially after what happened to Hermione last year.”

“I don't deny it,” Professor Flitwick replied to Harry, before turning back to Luna to say, “Thank you for giving us another chance”

“But if it doesn't get better, we'll take her in Hufflepuff,” said Harry.

“We should take her now,” said Hannah. “It's crazy sending her back to Ravenclaw now.”

“It would seem that you now have some friends, Luna” said Professor Sprout. “Hermione., Susan, Hannah, please make sure that Luna always knows the password to get into Hufflepuff. Luna, if things get bad in Ravenclaw, you can always come to Hufflepuff”

“Thank you, Professor, but I expect that I'll be all right. Can we go now?” she asked the headmaster.

“Yes, Miss Lovegood, although I am sure your head of house will have more to say later. But for now, it is time for lunch.”

As the children left the office, only Hermione overheard Professor McGonagall say quietly, “with courage like that, she should have been in Gryffindor.”

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Author's notes...

Thanks to snickerdoodle14, Dracco and xavvi for pointing out that I said in chapter 48 that neither Harry nor Hermione had heard of the Knight Bus, when they actually took it back in chapter 40. That sentence now been deleted.

I made a minor formatting change in chapter 1 and reuploaded it.

I also made a minor textual change in chapter 29, which referred to the hat sorting Muggleborns into Slytherin.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler. Nachoman deserves a special mention as the whole Luna being found in Hufflepuff with Harry, then being dressed up in Hufflepuff gear and the Hufflepuffs wanting to “adopt” her were all his ideas.

Please review.

Brian

## Chapter Fifty-one.

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

Disclaimer – I don't own HP. Bet you never knew that!

**\*REMEMBER\*** Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

Help with “Britishisms”? [thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural](http://thesiteofbrian.com) or see link in my profile.

(N) = See explanatory note below.

In the previous chapter...

Luna in Hufflepuff and in Professor Dumbledore's office.

**\*REMEMBER\*** Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

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Harry and Hermione walked into the Great Hall with Luna between them. Behind them, in a small procession, were Susan Bones, Hannah Abbot, Ernie Macmillan and Justin Finch-Fletchley.

As they walked towards the Hufflepuff table, Hermione gave Luna's hand a squeeze and she left the group and sat down at the Ravenclaw table.

The Hufflepuffs remained standing, Harry in particular glaring at the Ravenclaw table where a fair bit of muttering had started. He took out his wand and as some of the Ravenclaws looked nervous, he merely passed it from one hand to the other. "The bullying stops here," he said. The muttering quickly died down.

From behind them, a voice called out, "Hey, Fred. Do you think the Ravenclaws are intelligent enough to understand?"

"I don't know, George. Perhaps we should explain it to them."

"Right. To anyone too stupid to get it, Luna Lovegood is now under Harry's protection."

There was a snort of laughter from the Slytherin table, followed by a yell from Draco Malfoy. "Big deal."

"If I were you, Malfoy, I'd remember what Harry did to your door... without a wand" George yelled back.

"Yeah," shouted Fred, just as loudly. "Hey George. How long did they take to put it back together? A month wasn't it?"

"That's something I'd prefer to forget," Harry whispered to Hermione.

"He was just emphasising that they should think about the strength of your magic before they do something rash," she replied.

"He could have been a bit more subtle about it," Harry moaned.

Hermione snorted in a most unladylike way. "The twins? Subtle? Never going to happen."

While this brief conversation was going on, the Ravenclaws nearest Luna had slowly edged away from her, leaving her alone. To her surprise, Neville picked up his plate and walked over to sit next to her. Then, with a quick glance at each other, Ginny and Ron picked up their plates and went to sit on her other side.

Seeing that, George and Fred picked up their plates and followed their younger siblings. They stood, one next to Ron, one next to Neville.

"Besides, Malfoy, if Harry doesn't get you, we will. And that goes for anyone else in Slytherin or Ravenclaw stupid enough not to get it, mess with her and you mess with us. That right, George?"

"That's right, Fred. Anyone want a prank war?"

Somehow, George's comment, while underlining the intent, also lightened the atmosphere in the Hall, which had rapidly become tense.

Having made their point, Harry and Hermione sat down. Hermione hadn't trusted herself to say or do anything as she was still feeling hyped up and angry after their meeting with the headmaster. Harry could feel the tension from her, like static electricity running up his arms and down his spine.

He could feel that she'd been ready to attack the first-year Ravenclaws who had moved away from Luna. Unknowingly, they'd pushed exactly the wrong button. Fortunately, Neville and the Weasleys had intervened before she could do anything, but he could still feel her frustration and rage, like a pressure cooker waiting to explode.

Harry knew that he'd have to calm Hermione down, and soon, before she blew up at someone. As they sat and ate lunch, the tension between them was palpable. Even Hannah, who was sitting several seats away, was feeling its effects. Finally, Harry leaned close to his wife and whispered to her, "Hermione... You need to calm down. Luna's going to be safe now. You heard what Flitwick said. He's going to be watching out for her. We will be too. I'm not going to let her suffer any more. And if they try anything, I'll set the twins on them. Or even scarier, Ginny"

It was the last comment which finally brought a smile to Hermione's face. She squeezed Harry's hand, turned her head and kissed his cheek gently. It was a kiss that lingered for just a moment. When she broke contact, she whispered, "Thank you, Harry."

Harry felt himself blush at the intimate contact, but didn't pull away either. "When I saw her shivering last night, and the look in her eyes, I couldn't just leave her."

Hermione heard his unspoken plea for her approval. "You did the right thing, bringing her to us."

Hermione felt a bloom of love in her chest for her bond-mate unlike anything she had ever felt before. The gentleness in his voice, his concern for her and the implicit desire for her support and understanding pulled at heartstrings that she didn't even know she had before.

"I love you, Harry."

For a moment, Harry looked embarrassed, then he quickly mumbled, "I love you too, Hermione," before turning away with a slightly red face and beginning to eat.

Hannah had heard the exchange and grinned at Hermione and mouthed the word "Boys!"

Ernie and Justin had also heard them and Ernie turned to Justin and said, a little too loudly, "Whipped," only to be silenced by a glare from Susan, a glare which was toned down by the fact that her own amusement meant that she couldn't keep a grin from her face.

Worse was to come for the Ravenclaws. Returning from the final lesson for the day, they found Professor Flitwick in their common room, where he had cleared the centre of the room but for the desk he was sitting on (where he also had a child-sized chair and a tea table laden with sandwiches) and a half-circle of conjured benches. Gone was his usual cheerful expression that always made you think that he would burst out laughing any minute. None of them had ever seen him so stern-faced. Rather than laughing, he had the look of someone who was trying very hard to resist the temptation to curse them all. As he continued to munch down the sandwiches, he met every new arrival with a glare, and then he just pointed at a space on the benches and glared until they sat down. Watching him eat, a stomach would groan every now and then.

After waiting about a quarter hour, with all the currently present Claws shuffling uncomfortably, he spoke up.

"Is everybody here?" he asked.

"Stevenson, Jobs and Mackintosh were going to the library," a seventh year boy said.

"Williamson and Gates, too," a sixth year said.

"Lovegood went with the Puffs," added a first year girl.

"Grant's got detention with Sn... Professor Snape," the fifth year boys' prefect said.

"So I see. Luna can come and go as she wishes." The professor said, emphatically. Then he turned to the prefect who had spoken. "Go to Professor Snape and give him my compliments. Tell him that I need Grant here now. He can do his detention another day. Then round up the people from the library, too."

When the prefect didn't move quickly enough, the now not-so-genial professor snapped, "I'm running out of sandwiches, so hurry now!" Having watched him eat for almost a half hour, quite a few stomachs groaned. The diminutive professor's half-Goblin ancestry was more than apparent. His teeth... more like fangs... were showing and it made the young prefect almost wet himself with fear. He had never seen the Professor's demeanour quite so angry. Rumour had it that when the professor had been a duelling champion, he was quite fearsome and scared off almost as many challengers as he defeated in combat. The students could now understand exactly how that could be true.

The assembled students waited in silence, the expression on the professor's face continuously discouraging any conversation. About five minutes later Grant appeared. When the prefect arrived with the last missing students, the professor still made some more time as he polished the last sandwich, before he cleared his throat.

"You will have guessed that this is about Luna Lovegood. I had a quick look around when I had a free period this afternoon and I see that all her things have been returned to her. I see that you're aren't all quite as stupid as I was beginning to think you were. Although you were stupid enough to bully a friend of Harry Potter and the Weasley twins."



A very unwise third-year called out, "But we didn't know she was friends with them!"

The professor rounded on her. "And that's your excuse for bullying her, is it? That you thought she'd have nobody to protect her? Except for the first years, the rest of you remember how we lost Hermione Potter, thanks to bullying in my house. I thought then that I could never be more ashamed of being a Ravenclaw. Today, you have exceeded that shame."

There was no response apart from some shuffling.

"What is it Professor McGonagall always says to new first years before they are sorted? Your house will be like your family? After losing her mother a year or two ago, and having a father who coped with his grief by burying himself in his work, if there is a girl who needed you to be her family, it was Luna Lovegood. But instead of accepting her as one of your own, you didn't just ignore her and treat her as an outcast, you turned on her like a pack of hyenas. That girl wouldn't harm a fly."

"But she's weird. She believes in all sorts of rubbish and her father runs that crazy paper."

The professor nodded. "Yes, she is... unusual. How many of you Muggle-borns were thought of as weird before you came here? It's not nice, is it? And as for her father, after the stories the Prophet ran last year about your temporary fellow Ravenclaw, Hermione Potter, I'm beginning to think that maybe the Quibbler might be better for accurate news, or at least, no worse."

The professor sat down on the desk. He had been standing up to that point. "Now, what to do with you all? All of you either did the bullying or knew about it and did nothing. You are all equally guilty as far as I am concerned. After this meeting, I am closing the common room. You can all go to bed."

"But we haven't had supper yet!" a first-year boy piped up.

The professor raised the tension not answering directly, but rather picking up his now empty platter of sandwiches, then raising it to his eyes as if he was examining it closely. Then he walked his platter to the edge of the desk and, very deliberately, dropped it on the floor. Quite a few Claws recoiled as it shattered.

"I guess you will all be eating as much as Luna so frequently did. That's nice, isn't it?"

Nobody answered to that, other than a few more groaning stomachs.

"Now, as I was saying, what can I do with you all? Firstly, I'm taking all the 47 house points from you. I would take one hundred or more from each of you if I could, but there aren't that many to take. Taking them all now when we are only three weeks into the year might make it too easy for you to catch up, so in addition, I will be giving NO house points for your work for the rest of this term. However, if you all behave for the rest of the year, and work your socks off in the other classes, you might actually still have a chance for not having the worst result for Ravenclaw since 1915."

Another glare silenced the murmuring. "Secondly, you will all have a half-day detention every Saturday afternoon for the rest of this term. And yes, that does mean no Hogsmeade visits from now until the end of term."

He glared at them again, as if daring them to object. Being Ravenclaws none of them were stupid enough to do so.

"Now, as for our prefects." He paused as he looked around at each of them. "Your main job was to be my eyes where I am not, to maintain order and look after the others when I cannot be here. Either you knew about the bullying and did nothing or you didn't know, in which case you were incompetent. Although I suspect that it was the former, in which case I would feel obliged to expel you, I will give you the benefit of the doubt and assume that it was just incompetence. As we can't have incompetent prefects in Ravenclaw, you can all return your prefect's badges to me at breakfast tomorrow. I wonder what the other houses will do with two more badges each."

The professor stood up again. "Luna Lovegood was invited to join with Hufflepuff today. You might think that she would be better off there. After the way you have treated her, I am inclined to agree. However the Sorting Hat made it clear that dangers are coming to Hogwarts and she needs to be here, not for her sake, but for Hogwarts' sake, that is your sake. For that reason, she refused the transfer and agreed, that if Hogwarts needs her in Ravenclaw, this is where she will stay. I'm telling you now. DO NOT MAKE HER REGRET THAT DECISION."

His tone of voice added what his words did not, "or you will all regret it."

This time there was no murmuring or shuffling. "Finally, you may take it as read that having picked on a friend of the Weasley twins, you are likely to be victims of a few pranks in the days and weeks to come. You will take your medicine as Ravensclaws because quite frankly, if it weren't for the fact that I know that they will dream up some imaginative punishments for you, I would be racking my brains thinking of further ways to punish you all myself."

His voice dropped a little in volume. "I had hoped that after last year, I would never have to confront this house again due to bullying. You can all go to bed now. I am ashamed of you." When nobody moved, he raised his voice again and said simply, "Go!"

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There was a lot of gossiping amongst the other tables when the Ravensclaws didn't come to eat that night, which grew even more when people saw the Ravenclaw points at zero three weeks into the term for the first time in their history and further reinforced when on Saturday after lunch, the Ravensclaws all waited outside for Mr. Filch to give them tasks to do.

Professor Flitwick was less cheerful in class for the next few weeks; something of the joy of teaching had gone from him for a while. From his manner with his own Ravensclaws, it was obvious that he was not

happy with them and it was several weeks before the usual jovial professor returned.

Harry had been convinced that all the actions by Professor Flitwick (whatever they were) and all the warnings wouldn't be enough, but to his surprise, Luna suffered no more bullying. The majority in Ravenclaw simply treated her like she didn't exist, except for a few that had discovered that by doing something kind to Luna when Professor Flitwick was around was the best way of earning points.

Hermione had commented that she'd have been more impressed if they'd been nicer to Luna when Professor Flitwick wasn't there to reward them with points.

To everyone else's surprise, the Ravenclaws made no complaints about frequently finding themselves with beaks and feathers or coloured yellow for cowardice or the time when their knives and forks chased them out of the Great Hall forcing them to miss their breakfast. Even the few times when the food on their plates kept running away from them forcing them to run and catch it before eating it were met with stoic calm on the part of the Ravenclaws.

The ironic part was that Luna would nearly always sit with her house mates even when her house's meal had been pranked. Contrary to showing the stoicism or anal-retentiveness of her house mates, those meals were punctuated by her rather musical laughter, as she apparently loved to be the butt of a friendly joke. Harry couldn't help but laugh whenever she began laughing, not so much because of her fun, but by watching the appalled expressions of some of the upper-year Claws. Hermione couldn't have explained it better: as far as the twins were concerned, the prank war was as much about making Luna happy as punishing the Claws, so if she was so happy then the pranks may as well never end.

Although it was made clear by all the Hufflepuffs that Luna was welcome in Hufflepuff at any time, she chose to do most of her studying either in the Ravenclaw common room or in the library, much as she had done before. It made Harry and Hermione sad to see her put on her brave face every time she returned to Ravenclaw.

One evening after Luna had left Hufflepuff to return to her own house, Hermione asked Harry, "What's the matter?"

"It's my fault, isn't it?" he asked, rhetorically. "She only stays there for me, because I might need her there in the future."

"No, Harry, it's not your fault," Hermione argued. "Even though prophecies and divination 'n' stuff are very woolly disciplines, she made her own decision. It was not your fault."

"It never is my fault, is it?" said Harry, morosely. "Getting my parents killed wasn't my fault. Getting your father killed wasn't my fault. Getting your mum and you tortured wasn't my fault. Killing Quirrell wasn't my fault. Your mum being in hospital wasn't my fault. None of it's my fault. I'm just a bloody jinx."

"Language, Harry! And well, it just isn't!"

"No. It just keeps on happening to anyone close to me, doesn't it? You'd all be better if I went away. Far away."

"You can't leave me and you know it;" responded Hermione.

"I know," he sighed.

"And before you begin to think it, it isn't just the Bond. I wouldn't leave you if I could."

"Probably why you weren't smart enough for Ravenclaw," Harry murmured still every bit as moody.

Whether Hermione liked it or not, she knew that misplaced guilt was eating away at Harry and she didn't know how to tackle it. She just bit her lip, knowing that somewhere out there, Voldemort was still biding his time, getting ready to snipe at them again.

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Author's notes...

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Sorry for the long delay. A nice little security program called Free Internet Window Washer decided to forget about cleaning the traces in my windows program and instead deleted (securely and irretrievably) most of my programs, the my documents folder and all my emails. I was actually beta-ing the first chapter of a very promising new story, "Harry Potter and the Veela Bond", for someone. I still have the chapter, now beta'd, but don't know who to send it back to. (He's probably given up on me by now anyway!) If it's you, please get in touch. – Don't bother telling me who it is – he has now got in touch!

Thanks to Ingen for spotting that I'd used "laying" instead of "lying" in chapter 44 (now fixed). For those who get confused about the difference, the verb "to lay" is what you do to something else, for example, to lay an egg, or to lay something down on the table, whereas "to lie" is what you do to yourself, usually "to lie down". Obviously "to lie" also has another meaning, mostly performed every time a politician or a lawyer opens his or her mouth. (I wonder why the letters I got for my law degree stand for Lying Little Bugger.)

I've also re uploaded chapters 49 and 50 – I'd forgotten to remove "the story so far" from the bottom of chapter 49.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler.

Please review.

Brian

Help with "Britishisms"? "thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural" or see link in my profile.

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## Chapter Fifty-two.

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

Disclaimer – I don't own HP. Bet you never knew that!

**\*REMEMBER\*** Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

Help with “Britishisms”? [thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural](http://thesiteofbrian.com) or see link in my profile.

In the previous chapter...

## Luna – the aftermath.

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Hermione went to bed that night worrying about Harry. She sighed in rather annoyed frustration. "After all this time he STILL thinks everything is his fault."

Yeah, but he's cute, her own thoughts replied.

Where did THAT thought come from?!!! At least I'm not hung up on that idiot Lockhart, she thought to herself, unlike most of the girls in school. I mean, even the Ravenclaws, who should know better, go all dreamy when he's around.

He IS gorgeous looking though, came another thought. If I wasn't bonded with... Hermione angrily stopped the traitorous thought, but a smile came to her face as she wondered if she'd be as bad as his Hogwarts fan club if she wasn't bonded to Harry.

No, she decided. She couldn't be that stupid. He's an incompetent prat and half the stuff in his books contradicts itself. And she could never fancy a self-important big-headed twit like him anyway.

If I did though, she admitted to herself, I bet he'd notice I'm a girl, unlike someone else I can think of.

She got up and walked to the bathroom and looked in the mirror. Maybe if my hair wasn't such a mess and if my teeth didn't stick out so much.

Although her parents had become much more comfortable with magic, being dentists they had still wanted her to get her teeth fixed the Muggle way, with a brace. Hermione had been tempted, with her mother in a coma, to take the easy way out and get Madam Pomfrey to correct them, but somehow it felt like betraying her parents, so she hadn't.

It's not as if that would solve anything anyway, she thought. She had fat in all the wrong places, on her tummy and her thighs, and not enough where she wanted. She looked down irritated at her still small breasts. Although there was still plenty of time for them to grow, she knew, as her mother wasn't that big, she doubted that she would be. Suppose Harry liked big boobs? There were loads of girls here better endowed than she was. Ginny was almost as big as her and she was only in her first year. She was sure her mother would have had some advice, but she couldn't talk to her.

She frowned. She really needed her mother so she could ask her something else too. Just how do you buy a bra? What size would she need? How do you take measurements? Her mum would know all this. I mean, her boobs might be too small, but they were there and she needed to buy something. Otherwise she might get attention she didn't want. Some hope, she thought, miserably, looking down at herself once more.

As she raised her head again to look in the mirror, she snapped at herself. Really. Harry's blaming himself for everything bad that happens and I'm busy worrying about how I can get him to fancy me.

Being fairly sure that Harry still sometimes had nightmares didn't help her to stop worrying, nor did the fact that she couldn't sense them as well as before. Were they just less powerful and therefore less



important, or had it been a mistake to accept places in the dorms instead of demanding married quarters? Were they even drifting apart, she wondered, and if they were, what would happen?

A few nights later her worries about their closeness, or lack of it, were brought home to Hermione vividly. They had been to the “Deathday party” for Sir Nicolas, the house ghost for Gryffindor, as Harry had been foolish enough to get in a conversation with him and accept the invitation.

On the way back, Harry had suddenly heard something. “Did you hear that voice?”

“What voice?”

“It says it's going to kill.”

“Harry. There's no voice. Let's go down and see if there's still some food we can actually eat.”

“I heard it once before, at the beginning of term. You must be able to hear it.”

“Harry. Even in the wizarding world, hearing voices isn't a good sign,” Hermione had begun to say, but Harry took off down the corridor.

A slightly annoyed Hermione decided to follow him.

Harry had skidded on a wet floor and bumped himself on the wall. Looking up, both he and Hermione saw vividly written over the wall the words, “The chamber of secrets has been opened. Enemies of the heir beware.”

“It looks like blood,” said Hermione in a small voice, then gave a scream as she saw Filch's cat hanging from a hook in the wall. Filch was the rather unpleasant caretaker and the cat was equally unpleasant to everyone but him, but she still wouldn't want anyone to kill it.

Harry turned to her angrily. "Hearing things, was I? Now do you believe me?"

He turned to go, but at that moment a crowd came up from the Great Hall. Draco Malfoy was in front. "Enemies of the heir beware?" He looked directly at Hermione. "You'll be next, Mudblood."

Neither of them had time to react as another voice broke through. "My cat! Someone's killed my cat!" Filch pushed his way through the crowd. "Potter! I'll kill you. I'll kill you."

Hermione didn't think that she'd ever been as pleased to see anyone as she was to see Professor Dumbledore at that moment. Apparently the cat wasn't dead, but petrified, and Madam Sprout would be able to provide mandrakes to cure it, once they were mature.

Hermione had actually managed to make a History of Magic lesson interesting by persuading Professor Binns to explain about the Chamber of Secrets. They learned that Slytherin had left a hidden chamber containing a terrible monster that could only be controlled by his heir, who would use it to eradicate Muggleborns from Hogwarts.

Harry's reaction had been to insist that Hermione hardly leave his side outside of the Hufflepuff quarters, which Hermione refused to do, pointing out that she'd be perfectly safe in the library and did he really want to be forced to spend half his spare time there with her?

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The term got worse after that. Harry was seriously injured by a bludger in a game of quidditch and Colin Creevey, an annoying first year Gryffindor who showed up everywhere with his camera to take photos of Harry and Hermione, was also petrified. He had been taken to the hospital wing while Harry was still there recovering from his quidditch injury and he learned that the chamber had been opened before.

He also learned that the bludger had been hexed by the house-elf Dobby, in an attempt to persuade Harry to leave Hogwarts for his own safety.

The twins had thought that hilarious, commenting that "Dobby's gonna kill you if he doesn't stop trying to save you." For once, Harry hadn't been amused at their comment.

Hermione was so concerned that she went to tell Professor Dumbledore about it. "Very interesting," he replied. "You need not worry. No house elf would intentionally harm anyone."

Ignoring her first reaction that it looked like Dobby was quite capable of injuring Harry without intending to, she asked, "But what about what he said? About terrible things happening? He might be able to tell us something."

"I doubt that very much. I am quite surprised he was able to tell Harry that much."

"But if we can find out which family he works for, that might help."

"Hmm," the professor replied, non committally. "Well, do let me know if you learn anything more."

Hermione took that as a dismissal and left, rather annoyed at what seemed to her to be a rather cavalier attitude on the part of the headmaster.

If Hermione thought that things couldn't get any worse, she was wrong. Professor Lockhart decided to run a duelling club, then, at Professor Snape's suggestion, picked Draco Malfoy to duel against Harry. Malfoy conjured a dangerous snake which looked like it was going to attack. To the shock of everyone there, Harry began to hiss like a snake. The snake reacted, looking between Harry and Justin, who was nearest to it. Just as the snake seemed to be about to launch itself at Justin, Professor Snape vaporised it with a spell.

Justin turned to Harry and yelled "What the hell do you think you were doing?"

Afterwards Ron and Neville explained to Harry what a parselmouth is and that it looked like Harry had been encouraging the snake to attack. It had fallen to Hermione to explain to Harry that being able to speak parseltongue was considered a dark gift because not only wasn't it common, but the only recorded parselmouth in recent years was Voldemort. She also explained that the reason the symbol for Slytherin House was a snake was because Slytherin himself was a parselmouth.

As Neville pointed out, "Now everyone's going to think you're his great great however many times grandson and you're controlling the monster."

"But they can't!" Hermione had protested. "He's bonded to a Muggleborn, everyone knows that."

"This lot are stupid," Ron had replied. "Neville's right. They'll think you're the heir of Slytherin."

Ron's pessimistic prediction proved to be correct. Even Harry's own house mates seemed wary of him, especially when Justin turned up petrified only a few days later.

"Honestly," a frustrated Hermione argued. "He's bonded to a Muggleborn. How can he hate Muggleborns?"

Even their friend Susan disagreed with her. "Perhaps you're the exception," she replied. "After all, we know how much Colin annoyed him with his camera, and he had that argument with Justin."

Seeing how upset Hermione was becoming, she added in a doubtful tone "perhaps he doesn't really know he's doing it."

The twins of course, made light of it, choosing to escort Harry as often as possible, "Make way for the heir of Slytherin." "Seriously wicked wizard coming through."

They also conjured lots of little rubber snakes, which looked surprisingly realistic, especially when they twitched or moved on their own.

When Hermione yelled at them for disrupting a whole day of History of Magic classes Fred explained, "we're practising to become professors."

"Professors?" she snorted. "You two?"

"Defence Against Boring Lessons professors," George countered.

"That's not funny. And it's not fair, picking on Professor Binns like that."

"Come off it, Hermione. He didn't even notice."

"They probably helped people learn more," said Harry.

"How do you work that out?" Hermione asked, incredulously.

"Well, the snakes kept them awake, so they heard more of ol' Binns droning than they usually do."

Even Hermione couldn't think of a response to that.

When some of the first years were overheard talking about Harry being the heir of Slytherin, George threatened to feed them to the Slytherin monster.

"You can't," one had responded. "Only Harry can do that."

"Then we'll feed you to Fluffy."

"Fluffy? Who's Fluffy?" laughed the first year.

"Hagrid's vicious three-headed dog."

"How come we've never seen it?"

“Well, it's only here sometimes,” Fred explained. “It was so vicious that the rest of the time Dumbledore has it transfigured into a lawyer and let it work for a Scottish writer.”

“You what?”

“Don't worry,” said George. “He doesn't know what he's talking about either. If you want to know who Fluffy is, ask Hagrid.”

“Before we feed you to it,” added Fred. “Otherwise you'll find out anyway.”

Not even an announcement to their house by Professor Sprout could stop the rumours that Harry was the heir of Slytherin, though the Hufflepuff students made sure not to say anything when the professor was around.

Although the twins' pranks had concentrated on anything to do with snakes rather than on Ravenclaw for the latter part of term, they still had time for the occasional prank aimed at Ravenclaw.

The most successful was the simplest. An official-looking sign on the door of the library saying “Library out of order until further notice.”

Luna had ignored it and simply walked into the library anyway, but Hermione was furious. “How can they close the library?” she ranted, even more annoyed and frustrated than most of the Ravenclaws had been.

Ron bursting out laughing didn't help her mood.

“It's not funny. We have to study and I was busy looking up a special potion as well.” She put her hand to her mouth and looked around to make sure nobody else had heard.

Of course, the twins had. “Special potion?” George asked.

“Can we help?” added Fred.

“Only if you can get me into the library.”

"Might be possible. Depends on what the potion is for."

"You can't tell anyone. It's Polyjuice potion, to change us into some of Malfoy's friends. If anyone knows who the heir of Slytherin is, it'll be him."

"Maybe he is the heir of Slytherin," said Ron. "He hates Muggleborns, calls them all... well, you know what he calls them."

"Honestly, Ron. Malfoy? The heir of Slytherin? He's a joke." She turned to the twins. "So are you going to help me get into the library?"

"It's really easy," said Fred.

"Really easy," added George.

At Hermione's annoyed expression he added, "Open the door. The notice is a fake we put there to annoy the Ravenclaws."

"It's not funny," fumed Hermione, picking up her books and heading for the library.

"It was," Ron assured the twins.

They prepared the potion in the first floor girl's bathroom, as it was haunted by a ghost called Moaning Myrtle, so everyone avoided using it. That didn't stop the twins from calling out to any of the girls, if they were leaving a group to go to the toilet or to a shower, "Hey! Going to give Moaning Myrtle an eyeful?"

The twins pranks came to an abrupt end, or at least a pause when they were caught setting snakes in Professor McGonagall's classroom. Her reaction to Fred complaining that she shouldn't take things so seriously was to place them in detention every evening for the rest of term.

Harry's suggestion that they should try telling Snape not to take himself so seriously was met with the reply from both the twins, "Even we're not THAT stupid."

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The Polyjuice was a disaster. It spoiled Christmas as Hermione accidentally added a cat hair instead of a hair from Millicent Bulstrode and turned herself into a cat, which took a month in the hospital wing to put right. She looked so funny that even Harry couldn't help laughing at her predicament. Not only that, but the only thing they learned was that Malfoy had no idea who the heir of Slytherin was either.

The one thing it did mean was that there was no Hermione to tell the twins off for turning all the first years into different colours on Christmas day and insisting that they were mobile Christmas decorations. Harry had to laugh because they had also turned Malfoy green and silver. When asked by Ron why they'd picked on him, not that he minded, Fred replied, "well, he's as childish as a first year."

When Harry told Hermione about Malfoy, even she couldn't resist laughing about it.

After the embarrassment of a month looking like a cat, Hermione did most of her research alone. She was often spotted creeping around the castle holding a mirror, but wouldn't explain why.

One evening in early February, Harry was walking through the Hufflepuff common room, which was filled with mostly first and second years studying, when he suddenly began to feel ill.

Harry assured everyone that he didn't need to be taken to the hospital wing, he would just go to bed early. At that moment, Professor McGonagall entered the common room, a most unusual event.

"I'm afraid I've some bad news. Mrs. Potter has been petrified."

Feeling weak or not, Harry ignored her shouts not to run in the corridors and ran as fast as he could to the hospital wing.



Taking Hermione's hand, he found that she was cold as ice. A distraught Harry insisted on sitting by her for the next day, then, when Madam Pomfrey came to wake him in the morning, she found that he was as stone-like as his wife.

Professor Flitwick was called and pronounced that it was the bond and that he probably wouldn't awaken until Hermione did.

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Author's notes...

This chapter was a difficult one to write (hence the looong delay) as so much of what had to happen was simply what was in the books. I am glad to say that from here on out, things are different, in fact, this is probably the last section in the whole story where much happens in the same way as the books.

Thanks to ghostchicken for pointing out that Voldemort is **BIDING** his time not **BIDDING** it in the previous chapter (now corrected). Also to alix33 for pointing out that some Ravenclaws **WERE** going to the library, not **WHERE** going...

Thanks to my beta for this chapter, omega13a. Obviously the others were busy, but Real Life is more important. Helena, sorry you weren't sent this chapter, somehow I've lost your email address.

Please review.

Brian

Help with "Britishisms"? "[thesiteofbrian DOT com](http://thesiteofbrian.DOT.com) SLASH cultural" or see link in my profile.

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## Chapter Fifty-three.

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

Disclaimer – I don't own HP, and, despite writing about Luna Lovegood, I am not Stubby Boardman nor am I Sirius Black. Bet you never knew that!

**\*REMEMBER\*** Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

Help with “Britishisms”? [thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural](http://thesiteofbrian.com) or see link in my profile.

In the previous chapter...

The Slytherin Monster begins its reign of terror.

[illegible]

Susan Bones was beside herself. The following day straight after lunch, she met with Fred, George and Ron Weasley, Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood in an empty classroom.

“So why do you want us all here?” asked Fred, unable to keep a note of hostility out of his voice. “Think one of us is behind it now?”

"We need to do something now Harry and Hermione are petrified."

“Why?” sneered George. “I thought you were so sure it was Harry doing it.”

“I was wrong, all right? Say what you like. Nothing you say can make me feel any worse about it. And I did say I was sure he wasn’t doing it consciously.”

"You were supposed to be their friend," Ron accused her.

"I know," she replied, sadly. "There were just so many things which pointed to it being him."

Before Ron could snap something back, Neville said, "Susan is right. Look at it logically. Harry was always around when someone was found petrified and he was a Parseltongue."

"Parselmouth," Luna corrected.

"Sorry?"

"A person who speaks Parseltongue is a Parselmouth," Luna explained. "The Quibbler had an article on how Minister Fudge uses it to control invisible snakes to bite his enemies with cowardice venom."

The others had become used to simply ignoring some of the more outrageous things Luna came up with, so Neville just answered, "Okay, Parselmouth. My point is that I can understand why she thought what she did. After all so did almost everyone else."

"It would be stupid, though," said Ron. "The real heir wouldn't make himself so obvious."

"Coming from the one who thought it had to be Malfoy," George pointed out.

"Well, I was wrong," Ron admitted easily, making his brothers look at him with surprise.

"Where's Ginny?" asked Luna suddenly. "Why isn't she here with us?"

"Not feeling well again," Fred explained.

"We've threatened to tell Pomfrey if it keeps up," added George. "But Posey Percy the Perfect Prefect said to leave her be, she just needs to get used to being away from home."

"Try saying that really quickly," said Fred.

“Or when you've had a few Firewhiskeys,” added George.

“Posey Percy the Perfect Prefect,” said Fred, rapidly.

“Posey Percy the Perfect Prefect,” said George, even more quickly.

“Posey Percy the Perfect Prefect,” they both said together three times, finishing in a jumble.

Susan sighed with exasperation. “The point is,” she said, “nobody is doing anything. We're being kept in our houses, but nobody is trying to find out what it is, where it is or who is controlling it.”

“She's right, you know,” said Fred.

“Glad she's right about something,” replied George, still not quite ready to forgive Susan.

“Enough!” said Neville sharply enough to make the others look at him with surprise. “This isn't helping Harry and Hermione. And if it isn't stopped, someone might be killed. It might even try to get to them and finish off the job.”

“I do hope not,” said Luna. “Harry was my first friend. And Hermione's nice to me even if she isn't very good at hiding her opinion about me being unhinged.”

“I think we should start by asking Hagrid,” said Susan. “If anyone knows anything about a monster here, it'll be him.”

“Whatever it is, just don't offer to capture it or he'll want to keep it as a pet,” Ron warned her. “He thinks dragons are cute.”

“And how are you going to get to see him? We're not allowed out,” asked Fred, much to the amusement of the others knowing that what Fred and George were ALLOWED to do and what they actually DID rarely had much to do with each other.

“That's a problem,” she admitted.

“We might be able to help you there,” said George ignoring looks like daggers from his twin.

[illegible]

Using the map it was easy to find a way out of the castle, although it was less easy to avoid the teachers and Filch, who seemed to be patrolling almost everywhere they went.

It was decided that Susan and Luna would be the ones to approach Hagrid. Luna, with her affinity for creatures, would have the best chance of getting Hagrid to relax around them, while Susan would keep her on track, so to speak.

Ron and Neville would go along, but wait outside, keeping guard of the girls. "We would have taken you ourselves," admitted Fred.

“But the staff seem to have this idea that we might get up to things,” added George, sounding offended at the very thought.

"Can't think why," Susan replied smoothly.

“Exactly,” said Fred, missing the irony in Susan's voice completely. “But they check on us a few times a night now.”

"Or send that awful Filch to do it," added George with disgust.

“And we can't even hex him,” Fred said in an injured tone, “because the headmaster said if we did, he's expel us, just like that.”

“Or worse,” George finished. What the headmaster had actually threatened was not to expel them, but to tell their mother, which as far as the twins were concerned, WAS worse.

So, leaving Ron and Neville on guard outside, Susan and Luna knocked on the big oak door to Hagrid's house.

Hagrid opened it and pointed a crossbow out of the door, aimed far above their heads. With surprise, he looked down and noticed the two

second-years. "What you doing 'ere? You should be in the castle, where it's safe."

"It's not safe in the castle," Susan pointed out. "That's where all the attacks have been."

Hagrid gave a grunt, which Susan took as agreement and, ignoring her manners for once, pushed her way into the house.

"Look," said Hagrid, "we'll all being trouble if you're found down here."

"How are the Thestrals today?" asked Luna.

Hagrid, always easy to distract when it came to "his" animals, entered into a long discussion with Luna about the animals of the forest until Susan, flashing a glare at Luna, said, "Actually, it was about an animal we came to see you."

"Oh? Problem with an owl? Temperamental creatures owls, you have to understand them, you see..."

Before Hagrid could get going on how to treat owls, Susan interrupted him with, "No. We want to know about the monster of Slytherin. We thought you'd be bound to know about it."

Hagrid looked suddenly angry. "Oh. You've found out about that, have you? Well, I didn't do it last time though I was expelled fer it."

To their surprise, Hagrid suddenly burst into tears. "Now I bet there's some'at think it's me again."

"But that's silly," exclaimed Susan. "You can't be the heir of Slytherin. You're half-blood."

"Try telling some o dem them that," Hagrid said bitterly.

The hurt and angry tone in his voice sounded so unusual coming from Hagrid that Susan actually forgot for a moment that they had come for information and just said, "We believe you, Hagrid."

It was Luna who asked gently, "Can you tell us about it?"

A short time later there was a sharp rap on the door. "Quick! Hide!" said Hagrid.

Susan hid behind the huge chair Hagrid had been sitting in while Luna hid under Hagrid's bed and Hagrid opened the door.

Susan knew the voice very well. "It's Fudge," she whispered to Luna. Luna nodded, understanding who he was: the Minister of Magic.

"I'm sorry, Hagrid, that it's come to this," the Minister began. "But attacking Harry Potter... I had to do something."

"But I din do nuffing. You tell 'im Professor. You know I din."

"I know, Hagrid," Professor Dumbledore sounded unusually despondent. Obviously, Susan thought, he's fought this and lost.

"I have no choice," the Minister insisted.

"Where you taking me? Not Azkaban?"

"Your record speaks against you, I'm afraid."

Susan could bear it no longer. She jumped up from her hiding place. "That's not true! Hagrid was expelled without any proper hearing. Just because that Tom Riddle said so."

"He'd been raising a monster in the school. Now I don't know what you're doing here..."

"A giant spider. Tell me, professor. Before that girl was killed, how many were petrified?"

"Four," the professor answered.

"That's it then. It couldn't have been Hagrid," said Susan, triumphantly.

Minister Fudge looked puzzled.

“Acromantulas...” Susan said the word slowly making sure that she got it right... “can kill, but they can't petrify. It can't have been Hagrid's giant spider. Anyway, he's not a pure-blood. He couldn't be the heir of Slytherin.”

“Nor is Harry Potter,” said Luna, as she slipped out from underneath Hagrid's bed.

Everyone looked at her, puzzled, as she calmly patted away dust from her robes. She seemed to take notice only after several seconds of staring.

“Not a pureblood. But everyone thought it was him too.”

“I think this might be a case for extreme caution,” suggested Professor Dumbledore, “and not over-hasty action.”

Fudge looked defeated for a moment, then there was a sharp tap on the door. Professor Dumbledore opened it.

“What you doin' 'ere? Get outta my house.”

The newcomer, Lucius Malfoy, looked around and sniffed. “I am here to deliver this notice to the Headmaster. Believe me, I do not want to spend any more time than I have to in your... You call this a house?”

The professor still hadn't opened the letter.

“You've been suspended. I'm afraid the governors think you've, shall we say, lost your touch.”

“How many governors did you threaten to get them to suspend Professor Dumbledore?” shouted Susan, angrily.

“You can't take Dumbledore away! They'll be killings next!” Hagrid cried out, frantically.

Ignoring Hagrid completely, Malfoy said, “Obviously, education here is severely lacking if a student is allowed to talk to a member of the



board of governors like that.. Fudge. I'm surprised you didn't put this half-human in Azkaban after the first attack. I may have to raise this in the Wizengamot."

Fudge looked worried for the first time.

Professor Dumbledore looked sternly at Susan and said, "You will show due respect, young lady."

"Come on, Hagrid. Let's go," the Minister insisted.

Susan rounded on him. "You wait till my aunt hears about this. Hagrid never had a trial the first time either."

Minister Fudge turned to Susan. "Your aunt is an employee of the Ministry and will do her job."

"Of course she will: the Wizengamot appointed her as the Head of Magical Law Enforcement five years ago and she will enforce the law, whether or not it is convenient for you."

Fudge flustered about this, before a nasty smile returned to his face.

"We'll see how well she does his hearing if he's already in Azkaban."

"Then we'll go to the Prophet! People need to know what's going on!"

"The Editor of the Prophet owes me quite a few favours. He won't let such article be published!"

"Then we'll use the Quibbler! To make people realise what's going on" Susan said, gesturing at Luna by her.

"The Quibbler?" The Minister laughed. "That rag? Be my guests: after their last article about the supposed 'Army of Heliopaths', nobody will believe a word it says."

He walked out with Hagrid, Dumbledore and Lucius behind him, not realising that he had just made two very bad enemies.

The professor stopped for a moment and turned back to the bushes near to Hagrid's front door. "Boys. You can come out now. Please take Miss Bones and Miss Lovegood back to the castle safely."

As the Minister's party walked away, Ron said, "How'd he know? I was sure nobody saw us there."

"My grandmother always says he knows everything," said Neville.

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"Let's put down what we know," said Susan. "Firstly. This has happened before and someone called Tom Riddle accused Hagrid and he was expelled."

"And the attacks stopped straight afterwards," added Luna.

"We know a girl was killed in a bathroom and others were petrified before, just like this time."

"And that's it?" asked Fred.

Susan nodded.

"Well it's more than we knew before," George admitted, "but it's not much."

"The girl who was killed was found in a bathroom," Susan mused. She stared at Luna for a moment. "What if she's still there?"

"I believe it's time we go and have an eyeful at Myrtle, Susan." Luna answered, calmly standing up and gathering her things. "That would be nicer than the other way around."

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Author's notes...

Some important differences you may have missed between this story and canon. Dumbledore hasn't given Harry the invisibility cloak, so they can't use it to get to Hagrid's house. There is no car in the Forbidden Forest as they didn't fly it to Hogwarts. Harry didn't see Lucius with Ginny in the bookshop. Harry never got to "meet" the diary so nobody knew anything about Tom Riddle or Hagrid the previous time the chamber was opened.

Well done to the anonymous reviewer "Some Guy Online" who was the only one who spotted the references to a certain amusing document circulating the web. I'll let you know what it is soon, but as a clue – look for anything in the previous chapter or the next one to do with Fred and George's jokes.

It has come to my notice that I've been missing some emails. If you reviewed chapter FIFTY-ONE or FIFTY-TWO and didn't get a reply, that's why. I am also a little behind on replies to reviews in the last few days. I apologise.

Thank you to tumshie for pointing out that I had mistakenly referred to Filch as the gardener.

Thank you to scout-01, Nick Johnes, JJ Rust, EvilFaerie17, VictoriaM2006, Wonderbee31 , who all pointed out that I had misspelled Millicent Bulstrode in the previous chapter. So many people were spotting this, I actually uploaded a correction the same day instead of waiting until I posted this chapter as I normally do.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler.

Please review.

Brian

Help with "Britishisms"? "thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural" or see link in my profile.

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## Chapter Fifty-four.

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

Disclaimer – I don't own HP. Bet you never knew that!

\*REMEMBER\* Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

Help with "Britishisms"? [thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural](http://thesiteofbrian.DOT.com.SLASH.cultural) or see link in my profile.

In the previous chapter...

With Harry and Hermione petrified, Susan and Luna go to see Hogwarts' "monster" specialist.

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Not everyone was unhappy at the thought of Harry and Hermione being petrified. At breakfast the next morning Malfoy was strutting around looking so pleased with himself that if Susan hadn't known better, she'd have suspected him of being behind it.

"Best thing to happen to the mudblood," he crowed. "And Potter always was a bit wooden."

Fred retorted, "Is that the best you can come up with, Malfoy? A bit wooden? Even saying he's stoned would be better than that."

That met with some slightly nervous laughter from the other Muggleborns there, but blank looks from most of the other witches or wizards.

To everyone's surprise, it was Professor McGonagall who replied. "Very droll, Mr. Weasley. Do we want to know why you are so familiar with Muggle slang about illegal drug use?"

Fred looked thoroughly embarrassed and a little worried until he saw a slight curve of amusement on the professor's strict face.

Annoyed at having the limelight stolen from him, Malfoy couldn't resist commenting, "That's what you get for allowing low-life mudbloods in Hogwarts."

Professor McGonagall turned to him, coldly. "That's the second time this morning you have used that word Mr. Malfoy. Seeing as your head of house doesn't seem to be taking any action over it, I will deduct five points from Slytherin for the first time, and ten for the second time."

Malfoy looked towards Snape, whose face was rapidly contorting with anger and frustration at his 'colleague'.

"That word is not acceptable in Hogwarts or anywhere else in civilized society. If you don't want to lose more than the fifteen points you've already lost, Mr. Malfoy, I suggest you learn that, because I will double the penalty each time I hear it from you, is that understood?"

Malfoy remained silent.

"Mr. Malfoy. I am speaking to you. I asked you if you understood me."

"Yes, ma'am," he mumbled.

"I didn't quite hear you."

"Yes, Ma'am," he said with an obvious sneer.

"Very well. And for your disrespect to me, you will serve detention tonight." At Malfoy's slight smirk as he glanced at Professor Snape, she added, "And you will be serving it with me."

As the professor sat back down, Professor Dumbledore turned to her. "Was that really necessary?"

“Yes, Albus, it was.” she said icily. “I am tired of Severus’ snakes using foul, demeaning language towards those in other houses and unless you countermand me, I intend to put a stop to it.”

As she walked away, several of the students who had been close by during the Deputy Headmistress’ confrontation with Malfoy formed a loose huddle and wondered whether this could mark the beginning of a new regime at the school.

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A little later, when the students entered the dungeon classroom, Professor Snape had charmed a piece of chalk to write the recipe for a potion on the blackboard. “Any questions?” he asked, in voice even more surly than usual.

There were none. “Of course not. The insufferable know-it-all isn't here. I'm sure we all miss her and her celebrity husband.” He spat out the word 'husband' as though it was something bad. “Gather your ingredients and begin at once.”

Susan seethed but couldn't think of a suitable reply.

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At lunch, Fred and George quietly went around the group of friends, warning each of them, “Make sure you have witnesses where you are and what you are doing after lessons today until after dinner.”

“You mean you're up to something?” Susan asked.

“Us?” asked Fred, looking offended.

“Up to something?” asked George.

“Yes,” Susan replied. “What are you up to? No. Forget I asked. I don't want to know.”

"Don't worry. They won't be able to prove it was us. And we've warned all of you."

"Except Harry and Hermione," added George.

"But they've got a rock-solid alibi," finished Fred.

Susan groaned. "Ouch. With jokes like that, you're not related to Malfoy, are you?"

Rather than looking hurt, Fred gave a decidedly Malfoyish sneer and replied, "Unfortunately, much as it pains us to admit it, we probably are, distantly."

"Not distantly enough," added George.

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At dinner there was some laughter from the Slytherin table and angry words between them.

Professor Snape stood up and opened his mouth to speak. He began to breathe loudly as though he were wheezing. Finally, he managed to say, "What is going on?" before wheezing again.

"It's Malfoy, professor. He's speaking funny."

"Speaking funny, I am not," Malfoy protested in a rather squeaky voice.

The professor wheezed again. "I don't know what you are playing at, Mr. Malfoy," wheeze... wheeze... The professor was becoming more and more annoyed, especially as there was obvious giggling from three of the four tables, "but you are already in enough trouble. Try to behave."

"There is no try," Malfoy replied.

"Detention with me, tomorrow," the professor wheezed.

“Help it, I cannot. My fault, it is not.”

By this point the entire Muggleborn population of the school burst out laughing while the others looked puzzled.

Snape got up and stormed towards the twins, but was intercepted by Malfoy, who waved his hands in front of the professor and said, “These are not the droids you are looking for.”

All of the muggle-born students were quietly dying with laughter in their seats; having recognized the sound of the voice and the breathing immediately, as well as the bits of dialog, as being from one of the most popular muggle films of all time. Ron, struggling to speak from laughing so much, finally managed to say, “I told Mum it was dangerous letting the twins watch all those Muggle films.”

Professor Dumbledore, who was quietly enjoying the discomfort of his potions professor, called out to him, saying, “Professor Snape. Perhaps you'd better let Madam Pomfrey take a look at you.” Then, as the angry professor stormed from the hall, Professor Dumbledore turned towards the twins with an amused expression on his face.

After dinner Ernie went up to the twins and said, “Brilliant. First time I actually enjoyed listening to Malfoy.”

“We thought Flitwick would look better in the part, but decided Malfoy deserved it,” Fred replied.

“Just one thing. If you don't want to give Harry a heart attack on the spot, don't have Snape go up to him and say 'Harry, I am your father'.”

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Afterwards, in the Gryffindor common room, Fred admitted, “I kinda miss Hermione telling us off after a prank. It's just not the same.”

“Hermione tell you off?” Ron asked.



“Every time,” said George. “She said if the thought of a spell makes us giggle for more than five minutes, we aren’t allowed to do it.”

"Not that that stopped you," laughed Ron.

"Hey, she's Harry's ball and chain, not ours."

“So what you planning on next?” Ron asked.

"Say, we can't," Fred replied smugly.

“Telling, that would be,” added George, then tried to do a wheeze but ended up coughing.

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That evening, Susan and Luna crept down to Myrtle's bathroom. "So, you don't know what it was that killed you, but it was in here," said Susan.

“That's right. Just that it had big yellow eyes.”

“And Filch's cat was petrified just outside here. And Hermione wasn't far from here. Has anyone been in here lately?”

“Nobody comes to see me, poor miserable moaning Myrtle.”

Luna explained. “Myrtle. I know what you mean. People used to pick on me too. But we think someone made the monster kill you. And someone is setting it loose again. Wouldn't you like to get revenge for whatever killed you? Are you sure nobody comes in here?”

“Nobody ever comes to see me,” she repeated mournfully. As they began to turn away, she added, “even that girl. She never speaks to me. She just hisses and makes the sink open.”

“Girl? What girl?”

"I don't know who she is. But she's not very nice to me. She just ignores me."

On further questioning. Then learned that the girl was small, probably a first-year and that she had flame-red hair. Susan and Luna looked at each other in disbelief.

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The next morning, when the group of friends went down to breakfast, some of the older Slytherins met them. Pulling out their wands, to attack, they rapidly dropped them when the wands lit up and began making buzzing noises.

"I added an electric shock," said Fred. "Got the idea from a muggle prank catalogue."

George had picked up the Slytherin wands and the walked into the Great Hall.

As George dumped the wands on the Slytherin table, Professor Sinestra stood up. "What is going on here?"

"Sorry, Ma'am," he answered. "But they tried to attack us and for some reason they dropped their wands outside."

The moment any of the Slytherins tried to pick up their wands, they were immediately shocked again.

"Terrible! Can't even use a wand," cried George.

"Shocking!" Fred agreed.

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When the Slytherins that had tried to attack the friends were still unable to use their wands for lessons that morning, Professor

McGonagall found the twins between lessons and told them, "The Headmaster wishes to see you in his office. Now."

"Yes, Professor."

Before Professor McGonagall could react, the twins skipped off quickly towards the headmaster's office, singing, "We're off to see the wizard..." leaving her shaking her head.

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At lunch, the twins walked over towards the Slytherin table. The Slytherins looked nervous.

"You know, Fred. They don't look very happy."

"They don't, George. What can we do about it?"

George walked up to one of the Slytherins and gave him a hug. "To cheer them up, we'll say it's hug-a-Slytherin day." As the school laughed, he turned to the Slytherin and said, "You can pick up your wand now."

The boy gingerly did so. Relieved when he didn't get a shock, he pocketed his wand.

Other reached for their wands, but received a shock.

"George told you. It's hug-a-Slytherin day. You have to be hugged by a Gryffindor first,"

Some of the Slytherins, desperate to use their wands again, went over to the Gryffindor table to receive hugs from the amused Gryffindors, (those who didn't shy away in disgust), then returned for the wands.

Others didn't move, so, seeing an opportunity to embarrass them, the Gryffindors moved towards them. Most were desperate enough to use their wands to allow themselves to be hugged, but as a group of

first-years ran towards Malfoy, he got up and ran out of the hall, crying out loudly, “Hugged, I will not be!” followed by the group of laughing first-years.

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Author's notes...

(N)

Thanks to maipigen, scout-01, gravacor, xavvi, EvilFaerie17, Pixel and Stephanie Forever and xfu-chanx, all of whom spotted my misspellings of Ron's name.

So far still nobody other than the anonymous reviewer “Some Guy Online” has spotted the references to a certain amusing document circulating the web. I couldn't resist making you wait a little longer as there were no clues in the previous chapter, but I promise I'll let you know what the document is in the next chapter, but as a clue – look for anything to do with Fred and George's jokes in this chapter.

Thanks to my betas for this chapter, omega13a and The\_Scribbler.

Please review.

Brian

Help with “Britishisms”? “thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural” or see link in my profile.

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## Chapter Fifty-five.

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

Disclaimer – I don't own HP. Bet you never knew that!

\*REMEMBER\* Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

Help with "Britishisms"? [thesiteofbrian DOT com](http://thesiteofbrian.com) SLASH cultural" or see link in my profile.

In the previous chapter...

Malfoy has problems with Professor McGonagall, Snape, the twins and a group of first-years.

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Much to everyone's disappointment, both Snape and Malfoy were back to normal by dinner time. If anything, Malfoy was more vicious than usual and the majority of the Slytherins were the same.

After dinner Susan and Luna met with Ron and the twins. Before Susan could open her mouth, Ron asked, "Well? What did you find out?"

"We're trying to tell you," Susan replied. "Myrtle doesn't know much. Whatever killed her, it killed her in that bathroom, where nobody ever goes now, and all the attacks have been near that bathroom so we think it's got something to do with it. And as I said, nobody ever goes there because of Myrtle, well, except one person, Myrtle said a girl, probably a first year... er... I don't know how to say this."

"Just say it," suggested George.

"We think, I mean Myrtle says, well she didn't accuse her, she hasn't worked it all out..."

Luna glared at Susan and said, "We think it's Ginny."

"You're crazy," Ron almost shouted.

"The only person who's been going there is a small girl, probably a first year and she's a redhead."

"That doesn't prove anything, and Ginny wouldn't..."

"We're not accusing her..."

"It sounds like it."

"She has been acting odd..." admitted Fred.

"Not feeling well, especially after the attacks," added George.

"We thought she was just upset or scared."

"I would not believe Ginevra to be scared by such issues." Luna said, seemingly speaking to the air. "I have yet to witness her being visited at all by either of the twins Fobos or Deimos."

"Who?" asked Ron.

"What twins?" asked Fred.

"The children of Ares, the gods of dread and terror. They are said to never really be that far away."

"Er, right," said Susan. "Anyway we need to keep an eye on her somehow, to see if it is her."

"And if it isn't, we want to know what she's doing in Myrtle's bathroom," said George.

"Apart from the obvious," added Fred, looking slightly embarrassed at the frank look Luna had just given them.

"The best thing we can do is a rota," said Susan, "so she's less likely to notice one of us following her. I still can't see how she won't know though."

"I think we can solve that," said Fred, pulling a parchment from his pocket.

"Fred!" cried George, as he took it out of Fred's hand and shoved it inside his own robes.

Fred turned to George and said quietly, "This is Ginny."

A moment of silence passed until George nodded and pulled out the parchment again.

"None of you breathe a word; understood?" George said, glaring at the younger people assembled.

All of them nodded at once.

Fred touched his wand and said, "I solemnly swear that I am up to no good," and the others stared as a map was slowly revealed.

"It shows everyone."

"Where they are."

"All the time."

"Wow!" Susan exclaimed.

"Why didn't you show me this before?" asked Ron.

"The secret of our success, that is," said George,

"That and our brilliant minds," added Fred.

"But you can't rely on it completely," George warned. "It sometimes shows people who don't exist."

"What do you mean?" asked Ron.

"It's not important," said Fred, glaring at George for mentioning it. "We can't watch it all the time."

"When she's in class we don't need to," Luna pointed out.

"Let's make a rota," suggested Susan.

Afterwards, as they left the classroom, they ran into Malfoy and his cronies.

"Oh, it's the mudblood-lovers club."

"Lay off, Malfoy," said George menacingly.

Malfoy and his goons pulled out their wands. To their surprise, they glowed along their full lengths, Crabbe's yellow, Goyle's green and Malfoy's pink. After a few seconds the glow faded to nothing.

"What have you done to our wands?" Malfoy almost screamed.

Ignoring Malfoy's question, Fred said with an air of announcing something important. "George. The magic is weak in these three."

"Brother of mine, you are right." They pulled their own wands. They glowed bright red and a loud humming sound could be heard coming from them.

That was enough for the Slytherins, who turned tail and ran.

"How DID you do that?" Susan asked.

"Should we tell her, George?"

"No, Fred. We can't give away ALL our secrets."





At lunch, Draco suddenly turned red, literally, blood red. "He's so obsessed with blood, we thought it would suit him," explained Fred.

Over the next few days all Draco's insults backfired on him. When he turned up his nose at some "smelly mudbloods", he spent the next day smelling so badly of something unmentionable that even Crabbe and Goyle were avoiding him.

That was so successful that Fred and George tried to enchant all the portraits in the school to hold their noses and turn their back on him, but were unsuccessful when they discovered that the portraits in the school were controlled by the Headmaster and the ambient magic of the school. They did, however, manage to convince quite a few of them to do so, so that Draco couldn't walk around the castle without at least one or two portraits turning their back on him.

Snape had begun taking points from all non Slytherins for things as minor as "looking funny at him" or "breathing too loudly".

The next potions lesson, when someone asked him a question, he turned around and snapped out, "I'm a potions master not an encyclopedia."

That evening one of his own students asked him for advice and he replied, "I'm, a potions master not a counsellor."

At the following breakfast, Draco's breakfast bowl dumped itself on top of Draco's head, his porridge turning blood red as it ran down his face.

Pansy Parkinson shouted at the twins, "You'll get yours. Just you wait."

Fred and George glared at her; all humour lost in their expressions. "Give it..." Fred began,

"...Your best shot, toad", George finished, emphasizing the word 'toad'.

Everyone else, even the Slytherins, laughed as Draco ran out of the hall followed by Pansy. Luna quietly got up and walked over to Fred and George.

"I think you should stop it with Draco now."

"What?" they asked together.

"It's not very nice being picked on and laughed at all the time," she replied. "I would know."

Fred was about to snap out a retort when he saw the seriousness and the sadness and hurt in Luna's eyes. He sighed. "Alright."

George looked at him like he was crazy.

"Just a change of tactics, that's all."

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The following day many of the Slytherins appeared in class with small furry creatures on their hair or clothes. "If you must keep such useless creatures, at least don't bring your Puffskeins to my class," Professor Snape said angrily.

"We can't get rid of them, Professor. They're everywhere. Do you know what we can do?"

"I'm a potions master not a zoologist," he retorted, waving his wand across the room and vanishing the Puffskeins.

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Over the next few days the Slytherins were being driven mad by the small furry creatures. Finally Professor Kettleburn, Care Of Magical Creatures professor, was called in to get rid of them.

He lured them into the Forbidden Forest with a trail of spiders., but not before one more hilarious dinner when Snape walked into the Great Hall and as he swept around, Puffskeins fell from his cloak.

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The following weekend, Neville went down to Hagrid's hut after breakfast to feed Fang. Hanging on the fence nearby were all the roosters, dead.

Professor Kettleburn was there and commented, "Third time this year."

Intending to say something about it to the others, Neville went back to the castle only to hear a booming voice proclaim, "All students to the Great Hall at once. All students to the Great Hall at once."

All the chatter in the Great Hall stopped instantly as Professor McGonagall entered the hall looking like she'd been struck by lightning.

She counted all her Gryffindors, breathed a sigh of relief, "Miss Weasley. I don't know what you have been up to, but when you leave this hall, go and have a shower and change your clothes." Ginny was filthy dirty and seemed out of breath.

Professor McGonagall then went to the centre table.

The other heads of houses were also counting. "Where's Miss Bones?", Professor Sprout asked at the same moment as Professor Flitwick asked, "Where's Miss Lovegood.?"

The two missing girls came rushing into the hall.

"Take your places," shouted Professor McGonagall. "Is everyone accounted for?" She asked the heads of houses.

One of the Ravenclaw students shouted out, "Penelope Clearwater isn't here."

Professor McGonagall looked across at Professor Flitwick, whose head was down and his shoulders hunched over the table, making him look even shorter. She took a deep breath. "I... There is no easy way to say this. I am sorry to tell you that the monster has struck again. Miss Clearwater has been found dead in one of the hallways."

Gasps, a scream and several sobs were heard, along with a loud whispered comment from somewhere on the Slytherin table, "Wait. Wasn't she a half-blood?"

"Yes, but she was going out with a blood-traitor."

Murmuring grew louder and for a moment it looked as though fighting would break out, as wands were drawn.

Professor Flitwick stood up and waved his wand at the space between the Slytherin table and the other tables. Without his saying a word, a glowing orange shield appeared between them. Everyone looked at him in surprise. Quite a few of the Ravenclaws and several of the Gryffindors looked angry.

He spoke quietly, yet everyone heard him. "Miss Clearwater's memory is not best served by a riot. There will be a time for justice." His firm icy-cold voice cut through the shouting and the students who had stood to do battle took their seats again.

Professor McGonagall waited for the reaction to die down. "I have spoken to the Minister and the head of the governors and they agree with me that it is best to close the school until the monster can be caught."

"When will it reopen, Professor?" someone shouted out.

"We don't know if it will reopen," the professor answered, her voice obviously strained. "Your heads of houses will take you to your common rooms and you are not to leave there until you go for the train tomorrow morning. Professors..."

Professor Snape looked like thunder and muttered loudly enough for everyone to hear, "I'm a potions master, not a bus conductor," but led his students out nevertheless.

Percy was still sitting at his place. Fred turned to George and said, "I hate that monster. Actually made me feel sorry for Percy."

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After they had been taken to their various common rooms, Luna quietly made her way down to Hufflepuff. Susan was already coming out of the door.

"We have to see Professor Lockhart," Luna said.

"That idiot?"

"He IS the professor for DADA."

"Okay. We'll try him first. But I want to get the others."

The fat lady wouldn't let them into Gryffindor, and said that she couldn't go inside and ask somebody out, so they had to wait impatiently until someone came out. To their surprise, it was Neville.

"Where are you going?" asked Susan.

"I... I was going to the library," he answered. "Someone's been killing Hagrid's roosters. I just think it might have something to do with it."

"We saw the monster," said Susan. At Neville's shocked gasp, she explained, "We were watching Ginny on the map and when she went to Myrtle's bathroom, we followed her. That's when we saw it."

Neville went pale and mumbled, "So it was her. I never really believed..."

He seemed almost stunned, so Susan told him firmly, "You'll have to get the twins and Ron, okay?"

Neville agreed.

A few minutes later they were in their empty classroom. Fred has brought his book for Care of Magical creatures.

"Nothing," they said in frustration.

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After sneaking down to Hagrid's hut, they knocked loudly on the door, just in case someone was there. After a few heartbeats, they pushed the door open and poured inside.

"What are we doing here, again?" Neville said

"Hagrid must have a book on monsters." Susan replied.

"I don't feel right, searching his things,"said Neville.

"If we can find out about the monster, he can be released from Azkaban."

Neville handed her a large book, which tried to snap at him.

Luna ran a finger down the spine of the book and it stopped trying to bite. The others looked at her with surprise

"My father has it. He says it's quite good, but missing a lot of creatures."

Susan turned to the section on snakes. "I found it," she said after a few minutes. "This is it. Large snake, up to sixty feet long. Can kill with a glance. Spiders run away from it. Have you seen any spiders at all in the castle lately?"

"No," replied Ron, "And I don't want to."

"I thought the Puffskeins ate them all," said Neville.

"The sound of a rooster can kill it."

"That's why the roosters have been killed," Neville exclaimed. "To protect it. So what is it?"

"A basilisk. Now we know what to tell Professor Lockhart." Susan turned to the twins. "Can you get some roosters from Hogsmeade?"

"At this time of night?" asked Luna.

"Why do you think I asked the twins?"

"Fred, I think our reputation is on the line here."

"So it seems, brother dear. I smell a challenge."

"Right," said Susan. "We'll go to Lockhart's and meet you in Myrtle's bathroom."

They quickly made their way to Professor Lockhart's quarters. "You shouldn't be here," he said.

"What are you doing? Packing?" asked Ron.

"Urgent business. I have to go."

"You're running away! But all those things you did!"

"Never believe everything you read."

"You're a fraud."

The professor pulled out his wand and began to speak. As he said "Obliviate!", Ron had dived at him, knocking his aim off from Susan's head, pushing him into a chair and landing on him as they toppled the chair. Seeing that the older man was weakly waving his wand, Neville kicked it out of his hand.

"That was good, Ron," said Luna.



"Brilliant. You too, Neville." said Susan.

"Saw it on Muggle telewhatsit. They do it in a game, can't remember what it's called, played with a funny shaped ball."

"You are really in trouble now," said a very angry Professor Lockhart.

Luna took the wand from Neville and pointed it at the professor and said calmly, "Obliviate."

The professor looked at her, then at the others. "Who are you?" he asked.

Ignoring him, the left his office, George locking the door.

Susan said, "Let's see if we can find the entrance to the Chamber."

They spent an hour searching, using every revealing spell they could think of, but without success.

"At least we know more now we can tell McGonagall," Neville pointed out.

"We can't," said Ron. "If she finds out it's Ginny..." He left the rest unsaid.

"Even if it is Ginny, I can't believe she's doing it willingly," said Susan.

"Anyway, McGonagall won't do anything tonight," Ron pointed out. "And they're closing the school in the morning."

"We can't do anything more here," said Susan in a frustrated tone. "We've got no choice. We'll have to see McGonagall."

Having been so hopeful, it was a very despondent group who turned to leave the bathroom.

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Author's notes...

The “document”!!! – Finally quite a few of you have spotted that some of the twins' antics comes from a list called (variously) “150 (or 250 or 500...) things I must not do at Hogwarts”, sometimes called the “Marauders' list”, which was a blatant steal from a similar, older list based on Star Trek which itself was based on an much older list in the military. Again, various versions of the military list exist including “Skippy's list”, which one reviewer referred to and MAY have been the original.

I'm glad most of you enjoyed Draco speaking like Yoda from Star Wars. In this chapter I wanted to make Draco like JarJarBinks, but Phantom Menace didn't come out until 1999.

Thanks to Dave for pointing out that Lucius was there as part of the Board of Governors not the Wizengamot. Chapter 53 now corrected.

Thanks to ghostchicken for pointing out that Prof McGonagall incorrectly referred to Malfoy attacking “members of my house” when Harry and Hermione are in Hufflepuff.

Thanks to JJRust for correcting “made the the monster killed you” to “made the monster kill you” and the typo in “skipped off quickl” (alix33 also spotted that one - I have a at sticky Y key, so expect more of those).

Thanks to EvilFaerie17 for pointing out that the Slytherins were desperate enough to use their wands, not used.

Thanks to Madm05 for the “tribble” idea. You may also spot another Star Trek reference in there.

Thanks to Slvr0107 for pointing out that I had Justin saying things where he was petrified earlier. Thanks to him also for the “magic is strong with this one”idea.

Thanks to TheElementalMaster, who informs me that Logger's Leap at Thorpe Park (as mentioned in chapter 48) doesn't have a Splash

zone (Tidal Wave does, but that wasn't open then). I confess I was fairly sure it didn't, but couldn't resist adding it, so add that as another deliberate mistake.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler.

Fans of British comedies will spot a joke from the inside.

Please review.

Brian

Help with “Britishisms”? “thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural” or see link in my profile.

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## Chapter Fifty-six

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

My apologies for the delay in replying to reviews. I was eagerly writing and editing this chapter and part of the next.

Disclaimer – By the way, I asked Hermione to research this, just to be sure, and apparently, I still don't own Harry Potter.

Glad to see that acting the part of a bit of a pig, Ron Weasley, hasn't hurt Rupert Grint too much. He's fully recovered from his mild dose of Swine Flu.

Nice to see the cast wearing white ribbons at the London premier in memory of Rob Knox. I enjoyed Emma Watson's wet dress (probably more than she did!). Sadly, Hermione tells me that I don't own her either! Damn!

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Don't forget – Strike back at Warner Brothers' greed. Boycott the first week (when they get all their headlines), only see Half Blood Prince once in the cinema and boycott other WB films (movies if you're American!).

**\*REMEMBER\*** Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

Help with “Britishisms”? [thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural](http://thesiteofbrian.com/SLASH/cultural) or see link in my profile.

In the previous chapter...

## Research, plans and a death at Hogwarts.

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As they walked out of the door, they heard Myrtle say, "The little girl can open it."

"She's right," Ron exclaimed. "One of you girls - come with me to get Ginny. The others can wait for the twins."

"I'll go," Luna volunteered. "She's more likely to listen to me."

Once they reached the fat lady, Ron let Luna into the common room and showed her the staircase to the girls' dorms.

Ginny was on her bed, crying. Beside her was a diary.

"Ginny?" said Luna.

Ginny looked up, her eyes red. "They've come to take me away, haven't they?"

Luna was about to reply when Ginny continued. "It was me. But I didn't mean to do it. Tom made me."

"Tom?"

"Tom Riddle. This was his diary."

Luna reached for it. Ginny grabbed it quickly. "Don't touch it. It'll make you to do things too. Bad things."

"What do you mean?"

"At first I didn't realise, but when there was an attack, I suddenly woke up somewhere where I hadn't been before, near where the attack was. And I couldn't remember how I got there or what I'd been doing. And a couple of times, I woke up with blood on me. That was when the roosters were killed. I swear, I didn't know. Then, this last time, he said he controlled me enough that he didn't need to wipe my

memory. I made it kill Percy's girlfriend. I watched and I couldn't do anything. I couldn't do..." Ginny dissolved into distraught sobbing.

Luna just held her in her arms. When the sobs subsided a little, she said, "Ginny, we know what the monster is and we're going to destroy it, but we need your help."

"How? Tom says nothing can kill it."

"He made you kill Hagrid's roosters, didn't he?"

Ginny nodded.

"That's because the cry of a rooster can kill it."

"But all the roosters are dead."

"Your brothers are getting more, right now. But only you can open the chamber."

"Everyone's going to hate me, even Percy."

"Then help us destroy it, Ginny."

At Ginny's hesitation, Luna asked, "Wouldn't you like to help get rid of it?"

Slowly, Ginny got up. Luna took her hand. "Come on. Bring the diary with you."

As soon as they arrived in Myrtle's bathroom, Susan explained her plan. "The twins should be back soon with some roosters. Then Ginny can open the chamber and we send the roosters down there. Just remember everyone, don't look it in the eyes."

"But I don't know how. It was Tom, using Parseltongue!" Ginny wailed.

"Well, can you tell us where the entrance is?" Ron asked.

"That sink over there." She said, pointing at a lone one by the far wall.

"Tom?" Susan asked.

"Tom Riddle," Luna explained. "He's been controlling her through that diary somehow."

Ron looked furious enough to foam. Ginny wasn't the only one not to be sure if he was angry at Ginny or angry at this "Tom" for controlling her.

"The twins are sure taking their time," said Neville.

"They'll be here," Ron said firmly.

They waited for what seemed like hours, but was probably only a few minutes. Suddenly Ginny turned to one of the sinks and hissed at it in Parseltongue.

"Ginny! No!" cried Susan. "We don't have the roosters yet."

But the sink had moved back and a large hole had been revealed.

"Ginny. Close it again, quickly!" urged Ron.

Instead, Ginny simply jumped down the hole and was gone.

"What do we do now?" asked Susan.

"I've got to go after her," Ron said darkly.

"That's not a good idea," Susan replied.

"You think I don't know that, Susan?" he snapped back at her, the strain causing some of his old Weasley temper to show. "I can't just stay here. She's my only sister and..."

"Ron has to go," said Luna, cutting him off. "Ginevra is his sister."

"Y... you can't go alone," said Neville. "I... I'll come with you."

To everyone's surprise, Neville jumped down the hole. Ron quickly followed him, after shouting, "You girls stay here to bring the twins."

"I think Ron might need help with Ginevra," said Luna. "He's not very good with girls." She walked to the edge of the hole. "You'd better stay here, Susan." With that she jumped down the hole as well.

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Ron had reached an inner door to the chamber just as it was closing. He quickly propped it open with some of the larger ones of the mass of bones that littered the floor.

He walked nervously into the inner chamber and saw his sister, lying unconscious on the floor.

"Ah, the brave brother," a voice sneered. "And reinforcements."

Ron looked up to see a young man dressed in Hogwarts robes.

"What have you done to her?"

"She is dying. And when she does, I shall return more powerful than ever. Even now, people are scared to speak my name."

"Tom Riddle?" said Neville.

"Come in, come in. The more the merrier. And another foolish little girl too. How sweet. All to rescue poor little Ginny from the big bad man. Tell me. How do you expect to beat me if you are scared to even say my name?"

"Tom Riddle?" said Neville again.

"Never again! I used that name to fool this stupid little girl. When I left Hogwarts, I got rid of my foul Muggle father's name forever. I became a name people still fear to say."

"You're You-Know-Who?" asked Neville.



"No," said Luna. "He's really just Tom Riddle. He just wanted to be known as You-Know-Who. It made him feel more powerful."

"Another stupid girl." Tom waved his hand and Ron's wand spun out of his hand and into Tom's. Then he waved the wand and wrote in a script of flames in the air, the name "Tom Marvolo Riddle". Another swish of the wand and the letters rearranged themselves to read "I am Lord Voldemort"

"And so," announced Tom, proudly. "I dumped my Muggle father's name and became the most powerful wizard in the world, who even now, most fear to speak my name."

Neville turned to Ron and whispered, "I...I'll try to distract him. You and Luna take Ginny."

"You foolish boy!" Tom almost shrieked. "You think that three pathetic children can defeat the most powerful wizard of all time?"

"You're not the most powerful wizard of all time," Neville shouted back, his voice almost breaking with nerves. "Dumbledore is."

"We'll see." Tom turned and hissed at another door at the back of the chamber. As it began to open, there was a screeching cry. A large bird flew down and dropped something at Neville's feet.

"The sorting hat?"

"Dumbledore's defenders. An almost squib, an old hat and a songbird. Now see the might of Lord Voldemort."

A huge snake began to slide out of the door Tom had opened. "Susan said don't look at its eyes," Neville shouted as he looked down.

He saw the hat at his feet and sticking out from it was something golden. He reached down and pulled it out. It was a sword.

Tom laughed as Neville waved it around while his eyes were closed. His laughter stopped abruptly when the bird dived on the emerging basilisk and pecked out its eyes, blood spurting everywhere.

Ron and Luna had begun to pull Ginny away from Tom as Neville stood in front of him.

The basilisk launched itself at Neville and Neville tried to slash away at it.

A lucky strike caused a large wound to open at the edge of the basilisk's mouth. The monster reared up in pain.

It was now moving more slowly giving Ron and Luna time to move further away with Ginny.

"Kill him now!" Tom screamed at the monster.

The basilisk raised itself to its full height and came down hard at Neville. Luckily for Neville, the full weight of it missed him, but the strike was close enough to knock the sword from his hand and open a large gash in his right arm with one of its fangs, which broke off as it lodged itself firmly between two bones in his arm. Then it raised itself again for the final kill.

Luna screamed out "Neville!" and picked up the sword and slashed at the basilisk, a loud clang resounding around the chamber as the metal of the sword struck uselessly at the armour of the basilisk. The basilisk, having already been injured once by that sword, moved back slightly until Tom screamed again.

"Kill them all!"

As the basilisk raised itself up again, there were two cries which sound almost like war cries. Fred and George had arrived on their brooms, and flew in opposite directions around the basilisk. As they did so, they dropped the birds they had been carrying, who began to squawk in protest at the indignity.

Everyone looked expectantly at the basilisk, but there was no reaction to the squawking. Just as they thought all was lost, one of the roosters began to crow.

The crowing was quickly drowned out by a terrible roar of pain from the basilisk as it reared up one final time, then collapsed to the ground as Susan ran into the chamber, having followed the twins, but not having a broom, she took very slightly longer to arrive.

“Get Ginny out,” Neville gasped.

“It's too late,” Tom gloated. “She can't be saved. As her life force dies, I return in my full strength to rule this time.”

“Destroy the diary!” Susan shouted.

Ron ran towards the sword, but Tom blocked him.

Luna was by this time trying to remove the basilisk fang from Neville's arm. With a final heave it came out.

Sensing the danger, Tom leaped towards her, but she dived out of the way in time. Reaching the diary she plunged the fang into it, over and over again.

Tom screamed in anger and pain as he vaporized into green smoke.

Neville struggled to get up and crawled over to Ginny. She opened her eyes. “What's happened? The monster? Tom?”

“Neville and Luna dealt with both of them,” said Susan.

“Hey, what about us?” said Fred in protest.

“Yes, our roosters finished it off,” said George.

“You should have seen Neville fighting it though,” said Ron, then he added, “And Lord Voldemort, destroyed by a foolish little girl.”

“You-Know-Who was here?” Ginny asked, then “You said his name.”

"Tom Riddle was Lord Voldemort," Ron explained.

At that point Neville finally collapsed to the ground. Ginny forced herself up. "Neville?" She cradled his head in her arms.

"It's all right, Ginny," Neville said, weakly. "He's dead now."

"But you..."

"My family always said I wasn't worth much anyway."

"Neville! Don't go to sleep!" Ginny cried as she looked into his eyes and saw Neville's life slipping away.

At that moment the great bird flew down and landed on Ginny's arm. Ginny tried to push it away until Luna cried out, "No, Ginny. It's a phoenix."

"That's Dumbledore's phoenix," said George. "We've seen it in his office."

The phoenix began to shed tears into Neville's wound, which quickly healed up not even leaving a scar.

"What's going on down here?" It was Professor McGonagall. She had the other heads of houses with her and, to the children's surprise, Professor Dumbledore.

"Professor Dumbledore?" said Susan.

"Yes, Miss Bones. When that poor girl was killed, Professor McGonagall asked me to return to help with the search for the chamber. It seems that I wasn't needed."

He turned to his phoenix and said, "Fawkes. Someone must have shown me great loyalty for Fawkes to have come to you."

"That was Neville," said Ron. "He told You-Know-Who that he wasn't the most powerful wizard. You are."

Professor Dumbledore smiled.

Professor McGonagall gasped. "You-Know-Who was here?" Then she looked at the body of the monster. "And this is the monster? Is that what I think it is?"

"It might be more correct to say was the monster," said Luna. "Neville fought it with that sword, then Fred and George arrived with the roosters that finished it off."

All the teachers looked at Neville in some disbelief as Fred said, "It was all Susan's idea."

"That's nothing," said Neville, feeling embarrassed. "Luna killed You-Know-Who."

"Voldemort," said Ron.

The others looked at him in surprise.

"Or Tom Riddle. Either way, if a foolish little girl can kill him, I'm not going to call him You-Know-Who any more."

Professor McGonagall looked affronted. "You are telling me that You-Know-Who was here and Miss Lovegood killed him?"

"That's right, Professor," said Fred.

"Can this be true? Albus? Does this mean he is gone for good this time?"

"I fear not. But this gives us time once again."

"Tell that to his followers," George added. "Lord Moldyshorts killed by a foolish little girl."

"Why do you keep calling her that?" Professor McGonagall asked, obviously irritated at the phrase.

"They don't mean anything by it," Luna explained. "That's what Tom called me when we got here."

"A mistake I doubt he will make again," mused Professor Dumbledore.

Professor Dumbledore looked down at Ginny and smiled. "And what part did you play in this battle?"

Ginny looked down, ashamed. "It was me all the time. I let the monster out."

"But Tom was controlling her through this diary," said Ron.

"And she did help us defeat him by opening the chamber," said Susan.

"Can I see the diary?" Professor Dumbledore asked.

Ron handed it to him. The old professor looked at it for a moment.

"Tom was using it to take Ginny's life force, he told us himself," explained Susan. "He's been controlling her all year through it. When Luna stabbed it with the basilisk fang, he disappeared and Ginny woke up."

"It was Susan's idea," Luna admitted.

"And where did you get this diary, Miss Weasley?"

"In the bookshop."

"You bought it in the bookshop?"

"It was inside my potions book."

"It wasn't when I put it in your basket," said Fred, firmly.

"It must have been when Malfoy took it out," said George.

"Draco Malfoy?" asked Professor Flitwick.

"No, his father, Lucius," said Fred. "He was going on about how poor we were and he picked up Ginny's books and said something about them being second-hand."

"Really?", said Professor Dumbledore in a voice like steel.

"That was just before dad belted him," said George proudly.

"What will they do to me?" asked Ginny, in a frightened voice. "Will they send me to Azkaban or just let the dementors have me?"

"And why would they do that?" asked Professor McGonagall.

"I killed that girl," wailed Ginny. "Even if it was Tom, I still did it."

"Ginevra Weasley. You did not kill Miss Clearwater. Tom Riddle did. Far older, wiser and more experienced witches and wizards than you have been fooled or controlled by Lord Voldemort."

"I still don't want to be around when you have to tell Mum, though," said Fred with a grimace.

"Perhaps it might be better if I did the explanations," Professor Dumbledore said. "Now it's very late and time you were all in bed. And I believe that I have a train to cancel. Oh, before we go, someone please hand me that sword. I'd like to take a proper look at it in my office."

Luna picked it up and handed it to him.

"Thank you. Now, anyone who can't fit on a broom, just take hold of Fawkes' tail, when I send him back for you in a few moments."

"Fawkes?" Ginny asked.

"My Phoenix. Fascinating creatures. Can lift immensely heavy loads and, as you've seen, they have amazing healing powers."

With that, he and Professor McGonagall took hold of Fawkes' tail and were flown out of the chamber.

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Author's notes...

For some reason the previous chapter was slightly corrupted when it was uploaded. Hopefully it is now correct.

Thank you to EvilFaerie17 for pointing out that it wasn't made clear when Susan and Luna saw the monster. I have expanded on the conversation where they tell Neville slightly...

"We saw the monster," said Susan. At Neville's shocked gasp, she explained, "We were watching Ginny on the map and when she went to Myrtle's bathroom, we followed her. That's when we saw it."

Neville went pale and mumbled, "So it was her. I never really believed..."

He seemed almost stunned, so Susan told him firmly, "You'll have to get the twins and Ron, okay?"

Neville agreed.

Thank you to Egbert-Jan and hokage of dragon for pointing out that several lines were repeated. Don't blame my betas - I made a slight change after their last check and forgot to delete the earlier version.

Thanks to sox1020 for pointing out that The spent an hour search SHOULD have been They spent an hour searching.

Thank you also to lobothesacred25 for spotting that it was JEAN and Molly not David and Molly laughing at the end of chapter 23 (now corrected).

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler.



Please review.

Brian

Help with “Britishisms”? “thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural” or see link in my profile.

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“Since September, this school has been the scene of a costly and terrible battle. We have had a monster terrorizing our halls, one of the most awful and horrifying legacies of Salazar Slytherin. Any of you who are tempted to think that following the dark path is glamorous should remember this year. On the one side, a massive, evil creature that preyed on defenceless children and murdered a beautiful young

woman; on the other side, these brave young people you see before you.”

Professor Dumbledore held up the sword. “These seven students found the entrance and entered the legendary Chamber of Secrets last night, where they did battle with and defeated a full grown basilisk.” He had to pause for the gasps and murmuring to die down. “I might add, breaking quite a number of school rules in the process.” A titter of laughter went around the hall.

“The heir of Slytherin attempted to drain the life force from Miss Weasley, causing her brother Ron to go to rescue his sister. The others bravely went with him into the chamber.”

“The plan to defeat the monster was worked out mainly by Miss Susan Bones. At the height of the battle, Mr. Neville Longbottom called forth this sword and used it to fight the basilisk. Mr. Longbottom, please come and look at the sword more closely. Don't worry, I have cleaned it.”

When Neville approached to look at the sword, the professor continued, “Mr. Longbottom, for the benefit of those who cannot see, please tell us all the name engraved on the sword.”

“Godric Gryffindor.” Neville mumbled, his nervousness barely allowing him to speak.

“Louder, please, Mr. Longbottom. You have to read this for the entire school.”

“Godric Gryffindor,” bellowed Neville, looking abashed almost immediately after being pushed so far into the spotlight.

His voice echoed around the Great Hall, startling him, then the amused look on Professor Dumbledore's face told him that he had magically amplified Neville's voice.

“I thank you, Mr. Longbottom. For anyone who didn't hear that...”

"He means anyone in Australia," George whispered loudly to Fred before being silenced by a look from the headmaster.

"For anyone who didn't hear that, this is indeed none other than the sword of Godric Gryffindor." Ignoring the gasps around the hall, he raised his voice slightly and said, "Mr. Longbottom, you may return to the others and if you ever doubt that you belong in Gryffindor House, remember that only a true Gryffindor could ever call forth this sword."

"Two of our students went on an unauthorised visit to Hogsmeade last night, Fred and George Weasley. But I think we have to forgive them as the basilisk was finally killed by the crowing of the roosters they er...liberated there."

There was a little laughter at his tactful use of the word liberated, but these were quickly silenced as he spoke again.

"But more than just a basilisk was defeated last night. The heir of Slytherin behind the attacks was none other than Voldemort, going by his true name of Tom Marvolo Riddle."

Ignoring the reaction from the students, the headmaster held up the battered remains of a diary. "Voldemort, or Tom, as we should call him, used this diary to attempt to come back. He very nearly succeeded. He was stopped by a quick-thinking young lady, Miss Luna Lovegood, who he had made the mistake of under-estimating as a foolish little girl."

"Now, what should I do about all this unauthorised activity? For leaving the school without permission, Fred and George Weasley, I am deducting twenty points from Gryffindor for each of you. For the seven of you breaking the curfew and entering the chamber, I am deducting ten points for each of you, that is another fifty points from Gryffindor, and ten points each from Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff."

The twins looked almost ready to hex the headmaster, while Ron and Susan just looked stunned. Neville looked resigned to it, while Luna showed no reaction whatsoever. Three quarters of the rest of the student body began to murmur angrily.

Professor Dumbledore's face, which had become stern, changed to a smile as he continued. "For your bravery in tackling and defeating Slytherin's monster, I award to each of you, fifty points. For outstanding courage in battling the basilisk single-handed, I award an additional fifty points to Mr. Longbottom. For solving the mystery of the monster which has been terrorizing us all year, and for quick thinking and unhesitating action in defeating Voldemort, I award an additional fifty points each to Miss Bones and Miss Lovegood. Professor McGonagall, do the honours, please."

As Professor McGonagall stepped down to the seven students, he continued, "In recognition of your teamwork and your courage and selflessness, you are each awarded a special medal for services to the school."

As the other students cheered, Professor McGonagall hung the medal around the neck of each of the seven.

Suddenly Fred asked, "Have you got any more of these?"

"More, Mr. Weasley?"

"Don't the roosters get one each? After all, they actually killed the basilisk."

Not to be outdone by his twin, George added, "And they deserve points too. As we brought them, that's more points to Gryffindor."

That resulted in cheers from the Gryffindor table and jeers from the others. Even the stern face of Professor McGonagall managed a smile.

Professor Dumbledore cleared his throat loudly and the noise abated. "As you all know, the school was going to be closed, so there is a train back to Kings' Cross which will leave at midday. Although the monster has been killed, given the tragic death of Miss Clearwater, the staff felt that it would be best to end this term early and allow you your time to grieve and reflect. As the school isn't closing, anyone who wishes to remain over the Easter holidays may do so. The rest of

you will, I trust, return after Easter, eager to continue your learning and preparing for the end of year exams.”

Afterwards, Ginny went up to Professor Dumbledore and handed him her medal. “I don't deserve this,” she said. “I should have known never to trust the diary.”

The professor thought for a moment and a look of indecision crossed his face. Finally, he said sadly, “Miss Weasley. Older and more experienced witches and wizards than you have been tricked by Voldemort. Do not blame yourself, Miss Weasley. When the time was right, you tried to help despite your fears.”

As Ginny left to go with her parents, Professor McGonagall turned to the older man and said, “Albus, I saw that look on your face. What's wrong?”

“I fear that I have just caused that young lady a lot of heartache.”

“What do you mean?”

“Excuse me for a moment. I must catch Amelia Bones before she goes.”

He walked sprightly to where Amelia was talking with her niece, Susan. “Miss Bones, Amelia.”

Amelia Bones looked suspicious. She knew that if Albus Dumbledore used your first name like this, it meant that he wanted a favour. “How may I help you, Albus?”

“I have no doubt that Susan will tell you everything that has happened, including who had been releasing the monster, if she hasn't already.”

Amelia looked stern. “She has. I was about to go to speak to the Weasleys now.”

“You intend to arrest young Miss Weasley?”

"I have no choice," she said sadly. "She did release the monster, and I might remind you that one of your other students is dead because of it."

"I need no reminding, Amelia. You know she was being controlled?"

"So I understand. That will no doubt be her defence. But I can't just brush the death of a student under the carpet, Albus, you know that."

"And I would not dream of asking you to do so."

"Then what?"

"I ask you to wait. There will be a meeting of the school governors the first day we are back. I am inviting you to that meeting. Please do nothing until then."

"I will speak to the Clearwaters this afternoon, but it is essential that nothing is done before the governors' meeting."

"You know something."

He gave her a penetrating gaze, then gazed meaningfully to Susan and the people around. Then he looked back at her and spoke.

"Actually, there is one thing you can do. This is the second time Hagrid has been unjustly punished. The last time the monster was released and a student was killed, people acted too quickly and Hagrid was expelled. This time, Minister Fudge sent him to Azkaban. I believe he deserves to be released with a full pardon, fifty years late, so he may cease waving his broken wand."

"I'll see to Hagrid, Albus, but if I am to put my investigation on hold for that length of time, I will be with you when you meet with the Clearwaters. On the way you can explain to me what you know."

Professor Dumbledore frowned for a moment, yet conceded with a nod. Then he turned to Susan. "Susan, can I ask you and your friends not to reveal to anyone that you know who opened the chamber? Until the governors meeting?" "Why, professor?"

“So that justice may be done and an innocent girl does not suffer any more than she has to.”

Susan nodded.

“Amelia?”

“Very well, Albus. If, and only if, you can persuade the Clearwaters not to press charges before the meeting. But why isn't the meeting until next term? I would have thought it would be better to have it sooner.”

“Yes, a certain one of the governors was demanding a meeting today. Fortunately, I had already persuaded the others to agree to the delay. Now, I must catch Mr. Longbottom and Miss Lovegood.” He left, leaving Amelia to realise that he hadn't actually answered her question about why he wanted such a delay.

‘The old coot can surely honey-coat his way out of an explanation,’ she thought to herself. Then the thought struck her. ‘Honey-coated words...Malfoy?’ ... ‘A chance to humiliate or even arrest him in public?’ ... ‘I sure hope the Clearwaters are more politically adept than my impression of them.’

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The headmaster found Neville with his grandmother. “Good morning, Augusta. If it is not too much trouble, may I have a quick word with Neville?”

“Of course. Neville, go with the headmaster.”

“Thank you.” When they were alone he asked Neville, “How did your grandmother react?”

“She said,” Neville hesitated. “She said, my parents would be proud of me.” He sounded like he couldn't quite believe it.



"I am certain that they would, Mr. Longbottom. Now, I have a favour to ask of you."

"Yes, professor?"

"There will be a meeting of the school governors the first day back. Until then, I must ask you not to mention to anyone who had been opening the chamber."

Neville, who had been feeling sorry for Ginny, already had no intention of doing so and he said so.

"Thank you, Mr. Longbottom. Let's go back to your grandmother."

They walked back together. "Augusta, I must say how proud I am of your grandson."

Neville looked stunned as the professor walked away.

He found Luna outside. "Miss Lovegood? Not with your father?"

She smiled. "He's busy discussing the animals in the Forbidden Forest with Professor Kettleburn. He'll be hours yet."

"I trust you aren't still having to avoid your house mates by coming out here?"

Luna gave him a broad grin, the happiest he had ever seen her look. "In a way. Suddenly they're all glad I'm in Ravenclaw and wanting to be friends. They all want me to tell them everything. I came out here to get away from all the questions."

"And that is what I wanted to speak to you about. I must ask you not to reveal who had been opening the chamber until the meeting of the school governors the first day of next term."

"What will happen to Ginny now, Professor?"

"There will have to be a formal investigation."

“Poor Ginny.”

“Poor Ginny, indeed.”

“And us not saying anything yet. It will help her?”

“I hope so, Miss Lovegood. I hope so.”

“Then I won't say anything.”

“Thank you. Now, I must find the Weasleys.”

“That will be easy,” Luna replied. “They were having a big row in one of the ground-floor classrooms on the east wing.”

The headmaster frowned. “Thank you.”

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Luna had been correct. It did not take long to find the Weasleys. Percy was yelling at Ginny. Ron was yelling at Percy. Molly was just yelling while her husband looked shell-shocked. Ginny was crying. To his surprise the only silent ones apart from Arthur were the twins, who both looked decidedly unhappy.

“Silencio!” he said, waving a hand and magically quieting them all at once.

Everyone turned to face the professor. “If I remove the silencio, can I count on all of you to listen to what I have to say? Very well.”

When he removed the charm, the only sound was Ginny, who was still crying.

“From what I could hear, obviously you all know that Ginny has been opening the Chamber of Secrets all year.”

“What will happen to her, Albus?” Arthur asked.

"She wasn't responsible," claimed Molly.

"She killed Penny!" Percy shouted.

"You care more for your girlfriend than your sister, Percy!" Ron shouted at him.

"I asked you all to listen to me."

"I'm sorry, Albus," Arthur said.

"Young Miss Weasley here did indeed open the chamber, but she was being controlled. Most of the time, she was not even aware of doing it."

Percy snorted angrily.

"Percy, there is more to this than you know. This was an attack on your father..."

"On Dad?"

"It was intended to discredit him and his Muggle legislation. It was also intended to tear your family apart."

"And it seems to be working," said Fred, bitterly.

"I must ask you all something very seriously. Do not mention to anyone that it was Ginny who was opening the chamber."

"Why?" asked Percy, with a petulant tone to his voice that drew an angry look from his mother.

Before she could say anything to him, Professor Dumbledore answered, "So the real culprit can be caught. Don't you want to know who was really behind the attacks on your family and the murder of Miss Clearwater?"

"Of course I do."

This time Molly did say something. "Don't use that tone with the headmaster;" she snapped.

"It's all right, Molly. It is perfectly understandable. Percy, may I have your word that you will say nothing until the meeting of the school governors on the first day of next term?"

"Penny's parents have a right to know."

"Yes. They do. And I have a meeting with them this afternoon. They also have a right to see justice done. And now, I must go. I have other things to attend to."

"We will be thinking of you this afternoon, Headmaster," said Molly.

"Thank you, Molly. Molly, Arthur, take care of your family. I implore you not to allow this to break you apart."

"We will try, Albus, thank you."

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Only those who had been petrified remained at the school over the Easter holiday and a week after Easter, Madam Pomfrey was able to use the potion made from the harvested mandrakes to restore them.

In her dreams, Hermione saw a giant snake-like creature with huge yellow eyes. It was chasing her down one of the corridors in Hogwarts. She ran so hard to get away, but it caught her and pounced, hissing at her, knocking her to the ground. It seemed to be shaking her somehow.

"Open your eyes!"

She tried to resist, but the voice continued, as did the shaking.

"Open your eyes!"

She opened them, to see another pair of eyes staring down at her, a very familiar pair of eyes.

“Mum?”

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\* - Author's notes...

(N)

Thanks to gravacor for correcting a typo.

Thanks to LadyEmber for suggesting that I should make Susan's warning about not looking it in the eyes clearer. (Now done)

Thanks to HonorBridge for spotting a couple of continuity errors relating to Neville's battle with the basilisk, now corrected.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, Militis, a.k.a. Mike, omega13a, Helena and The\_Scribbler.

Please review.

Brian

Help with “Britishisms”? “thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural” or see link in my profile.

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## Chapter Fifty-eight

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

Disclaimer – I don't own HP. Bet you never knew that!

**\*REMEMBER\*** Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

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In the previous chapter...

## Meetings in the aftermath, part one

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From chapter fifty-seven:-

In her dreams, Hermione saw a giant snake-like creature with huge yellow eyes. It was chasing her down one of the corridors in Hogwarts. She ran so hard to get away, but it caught her and pounced, hissing at her, knocking her to the ground. It seemed to be shaking her somehow.

“Open your eyes!”

She tried to resist, but the voice continued, as did the shaking.

“Open your eyes!”

She opened them, to see another pair of eyes staring down at her, a very familiar pair of eyes.

“Mum?”

Hermione blinked hard, closing her eyes then opened them again. "Mum?" she asked again.

A hand shakily caressed her cheek and the face in front of her warmed with a smile. Her mother's expression seemed somewhat crooked, but it was Mum!

"Yes, it's your mother, Hermione," said a familiar voice to the side.

"Miss Collier?" Hermione asked, turning to the sound.

"Nice to see you awake," said the teacher, beaming at Hermione. "I'm sure your mother would tell you the same if she could."

"ah aan eek," Hermione's mother said, her face showing her frustration.

"I don't understand."

"I think she said she can't speak yet," Miss Collier explained. "Her recovery is astounding her doctors and it seems that her brain's cognitive centres are mostly intact. A lot of her brain still seems to be virtually inactive, though."

Her mother growled at Miss Collier.

Miss Collier replied to Hermione. "Last month she couldn't tell a spoon from a fork, but she's learning. Just not quickly enough to satisfy her. I found out where you get your 'I want to know everything and be able to do everything right now' gene! She so wanted to be able to say hello properly to you when you woke up."

"Don't worry about that, Mum," Hermione said, reaching up with her arms and noticing that they felt as heavy as lead. "Just give me a hug," she pleaded.

Her mother gave a cracking sound out of her throat and leaned into the bed. Her arms went around Hermione and pulled her into a feeble, shaky hug. Her mother mumbled something inarticulate into her ear.

Hermione wept as, with all the strength she could currently muster, she weakly pulled herself into the hug. "I love you too."

After a while, they both let go. Her mother crashed down onto a wheelchair that Hermione hadn't noticed.

Hermione turned to her former teacher and feebly reached for her. Miss Collier leaned in to receive her hug.

Letting Miss Collier go, Hermione said suddenly, "Where's Harry?"

"He went to the loo a few minutes ago. He woke up before you did, a few hours ago."

"That's a first," said Hermione with a laugh.

"I heard that!" a voice protested.

"Harry!" Hermione squealed, trying to get up.

"Give it an hour or so before you try to get up," Madam Pomfrey advised. She had come in behind Harry. "The paralysis won't wear off fully for a few more days, though. Just take it slow and rest a bit."

"Are you all right? How long has Mum been here? How did Mum and Miss Collier get here? Will Mum never be able to speak properly again? When did...."

"Madam Pomfrey, I congratulate you," said Miss Collier. "I'd say Hermione is completely back to normal."

Harry snorted as he stiffly eased himself beside Hermione on the bed.

"I just want to know what's been happening," Hermione whined.

"You first," said Harry to Miss Collier, as he slipped an arm around Hermione's shoulder.

"Molly and I continued to visit your mother, taking recordings of you both as well as her favourite music. Towards the end of last year, she



started showing a response. Telling her about you turning yourself into a cat might have had something to do with it.”

Harry laughed while Hermione looked embarrassed.

“About a month ago, she began to open her eyes and tried to speak. That was probably when we told her that you'd been petrified. When we were informed that they'd be trying to revive you all, she insisted on coming. Professor Dumbledore was kind enough to bring both of us.”

“Mum, I thought I'd never...” Hermione burst into tears. Her mother reached across to put an arm over her daughter.

When her tears subsided, Hermione asked, “Does she know about...?”

“Ee,” said her mother loudly.

“Sorry?”

“Ee,” her mother repeated in a frustrated tone.

Miss Collier handed her what looked out an oversized keyboard with a screen and placed a rod in her other hand.

Mrs. Granger began to slowly tap on the keys until the words appeared on the screen with a beep, “ME! Ask ME,” then “Yes, I know.” She looked sad, then tapped another couple of keys. The screen beeped again and then showed the words “My turn.”

“I definitely see where you get it from, Hermione. Your mother has that thing programmed with about a hundred questions to ask you, maybe even two hundred! I'm not really sure.”

Mrs. Granger flashed a look of mild irritation at Miss Collier, then the screen beeped again. “How was your Christmas without us?”

Hermione gasped. “I never thought. I forgot. I can't believe...”

Harry explained, "Hermione was so worked up about having turned herself into a cat that she actually forgot Christmas." He looked sad for a moment. "As it was a year since, since Dad... well, I didn't want to remind her."

Hermione looked startled that Harry had gone through the awful time of the first anniversary of losing their father alone because he hadn't wanted to bother her. She hugged his side and tried to look him in the eyes, while he tried to look aside.

The screen beeped again. "Why did you turn yourself into a cat?"

Harry was thankful to their mother for changing the subject as Hermione explained all about Polyjuice potion, how it worked and why they made it.

Then Hermione asked, "Did they catch the monster? I think it's a basilisk."

"I know," Harry replied. "When I went to the loo, Ginny was outside. You'll never believe it, Neville fought the basilisk with a sword and Fred and George got some roosters to kill it, then Luna killed Voldemort."

"What?"

"She's gone to get her family and she's promised they'll explain everything."

With perfect timing, the relative peace of the Hospital wing was shattered as Molly Weasley arrived, with Fred, George, Ron and Ginny. They had also brought Remus and Luna Lovegood with them.

"Neville and Susan send their love to you both," Ginny said. "They said they'll see you when the holidays are over. Susan's family's involved in some Ministry function and Neville's grandmother took him away for Easter as a treat."

Hermione made them explain in full detail everything that had happened while she had been petrified. It took a long time as her

mother all had a lot of questions, which took some time to type on her keyboard.

When George slipped in what for Hermione was the stunning revelation that Harry had also been unconscious most of the time, Hermione gasped. "But how did you know when Ginny was opening the chamber? You could hardly follow her ALL the time."

Fred coughed. "Sorry. That's a trade secret."

George whispered to her, "We'll tell you later."

Molly looked annoyed.

Suddenly Luna said almost wistfully, "I really think you should ask Moony why your map didn't always work properly."

"Luna!" Fred and George cried together.

"How did you know?" asked Remus. "And what map?"

"It was easy really," Luna explained. "This was the Marauders' Map. I asked Professor Flitwick if he knew who the Marauders were and he told me. You're a werewolf, hence, Moony."

"You have our map here?"

"You're really one of the Marauders?" asked George, looking and sounding awed.

"What do you mean, Luna?" Remus asked, "That it didn't always work properly?"

"Well, it kept showing someone called Peter Pettigrew near Ron, but there was nobody there," Luna explained.

"That's impossible," said Remus, paling visibly.

"Yeah," said Fred. "I mean, who'd want to be near Ron?"

“Except his smelly ol' rat he got from Percy,” added George, to an angry look from his mother. “And not even a whole rat, it's got one toe missing.”

Molly opened her mouth to shout at them, but was interrupted before she could even start her rant.

“I thought I might find you all here.”

“Professor Dumbledore!” said Hermione.

“Welcome back to the land of the living, Mrs. Potter.”

“Professor!” Remus gasped excitedly. “Peter Pettigrew...”

“Yes,” the professor's voice hardened, “I heard. Remus, there are too many powerful people who will not want the truth to come out. There is a governor's meeting on the first day back. Amelia Bones will be present and I think I will also ask Rita Skeeter from the Prophet...”

There was a howl of protest from the children present...

“She will never hide a story. And it would make a nice change for her to have something true to write. But just to be on the safe side, I will invite Xenophilius Lovegood as well. All of you will be asked to tell your stories of what happened. And Ron, please bring your rat. I assume it is at the Burrow?”

“That rat's been at the Burrow all this time and I never knew?” exclaimed Remus.

“Mum would make me keep him in my room when you came for lessons,” explained Ron. “But why do you want it anyway?”

“Mr. Weasley, I must ask that none of you mention this conversation in the presence of your rat.”

“But why?”

"This is critical, Mr. Weasley. A man's life depends on it. I promise you that you will understand at the meeting. Molly, can you cast an unbreakable charm on the rat's cage, and a locking charm so that it cannot escape, just in case someone lets something slip."

A furious looking Molly nodded vigorously before turning to Remus. "I'm sorry, Remus. I never dreamed that..."

"It's okay, Molly. I understand."

"With your permission, Headmaster, I think it's time everyone left now, apart from my patients. As they both took longer to wake up than the others, I want them to stay quiet a little longer."

The headmaster nodded.

"Can Mum stay for a bit, Madam Pomfrey?" Hermione asked.

The mediwitch's stern face softened. "For a bit. No excitement, mind you."

When everyone else had left, Hermione turned to her mother and burst into tears. "I'm so sorry. All those things I said, the day it happened... I didn't mean any of it."

Jean Granger typed, "I know. It doesn't matter."

"But dad... I can't even tell him I'm sorry."

Her mother responded. "He knew."

"But he died thinking... I don't know what he died thinking."

"He died protecting the family he loved. And the son and daughter he knew loved him." At Hermione's sad look, she added, "We all say things we don't mean sometimes. It doesn't mean we don't love each other."

"And then I brought us back to Hogwarts..."

Harry tried to calm her down by adding, "Yeah, she dragged me here kicking and screaming."

Their mother smiled. "In your world you are adults. You had to do what you believed was right."

"And I took us back to the Dursleys."

"I know. I understand why, but I won't pretend I'm happy. We will talk another time. You and Harry need some time together. Harry, please call Miss Collier."

Miss Collier followed Harry back into the room, told them that she would be back with their mother in a few days, then wheeled Mrs. Granger out of the hospital wing.

"Hermione, I'm sorry."

"What for?"

"It was a type of snake. I should have been able to track it down and stop it before it got you."

"Don't be silly, Harry," Hermione said, in the bossiest voice she could manage.

"But you could have died."

"But I didn't."

"When you were petrified... I couldn't feel you any more. It was just awful. I don't ever want to be without you again." To Hermione's surprise and delight, he leaned over and kissed her full on the lips.

"I never want to lose you again," he said, his voice breaking with emotion.

"You won't," she assured him, then returned the kiss.

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“Sitting here alone?” Luna asked.

“It's better this way,” Ginny replied, a world of misery in her voice.  
“Nobody really wants me around.”

Luna looked at her for what seemed like an age to Ginny before finally saying, “I don't think that's true.”

“Percy still won't speak to me, he won't even be in the same room as me except when Mum makes him. He says I killed Penny. Even my Mum and Dad look at me funny now. Everyone's going to blame me, aren't they?”

“They might,” Luna admitted, honestly.

“I keep looking in the Prophet, but there's been nothing apart from a paragraph saying that a monster killed a student, but was later caught and killed. I'm surprised they haven't said any more than that.”

“They aren't allowed to,” Luna explained. “Until the investigation is complete, we can't print anything more either.”

“There's an investigation?” Ginny sounded frightened.

“Of course. There has to be. A girl was killed.”

“Then everyone will know it was me that killed her. Just like Percy says and Mum and Dad think. Even the twins aren't the same with me as before.”

“Is that so?”

“Because they know I killed her. Because it's my fault.”

“No, it isn't.”

“Of course it is.”

"If I pick up a hammer and kill someone with it, is it the hammer's fault?"

"Don't be silly."

"Well, then. Tom used you like a hammer."

"Ah! There you are!" It was Ron. "Come on, the meeting's starting and we've got to be there to say what happened."

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"Mr. Chairman," began Lucius Malfoy. "I must protest at the delay in calling this meeting. It should have been held weeks ago."

"Professor Dumbledore assured me that the delay was necessary and he would explain why at the meeting." The old man looked at the headmaster with expectancy.

"Yes, Mr. Chairman. I intend to show you all, governors, parents and reporters alike, exactly what was stalking the halls of this school."

"That doesn't explain the delay, Albus."

"But it does. The monster is in the Chamber of Secrets. And Harry Potter is the only one available at this time who can open the Chamber of Secrets. He was unfortunately unconscious until a few days ago."

"So it was Harry Potter controlling the monster?" Rita Skeeter asked.

"No, Miss Skeeter, it was not."

"But if only he can open..."

"All will be explained. But first, we need to move this meeting to the Chamber. With your permission, Mr. Chairman?"



"Of course, Albus."

"Follow me everyone, please."

When they reached Myrtle's bathroom, they found the chamber open with Professor McGonagall standing close to it.

"I asked Harry to open it for us," she explained. "The students involved in this matter are all awaiting us, inside."

Professor McGonagall handed a broom to each of them. "Please take care, these are school brooms and as Madam Hooch is always reminding us, they are rather unstable as they haven't been replaced for over thirty years."

"And it's been nearly twice that time since I was on a broom," the chairman said ruefully.

"Don't worry. It's like riding a bike or falling off a log," Professor Dumbledore said with amusement.

"Falling off is what I am worried about," the chairman said, but the glint in his eyes gave away his enthusiasm. "After you then, Albus."

When they reached the inner part of the Chamber, they found a couple of rows of chairs facing the huge body of the monster. There were gasps and many expressions of surprise as they took in for themselves the enormity of the basilisk. Amelia Bones, Arthur and Molly Weasley and Augusta Longbottom looked pale.

"Albus. I understood that students killed the monster," Rita Skeeter asked. "Are you telling me that these students killed THAT?"

"That is correct, Miss Skeeter."

Her quill began writing rapidly while Augusta Longbottom looked in amazement at her grandson as if she was seeing him for the first time.

"Now I know you are all eager to hear about the monster, but there is another matter I would like to bring to your attention first. Right now,

in this school, in this chamber, there is a killer present. A death-eater.”

Mischievously, he gave a sideways glance at Lucius Malfoy, but then called out, “Mr. Ronald Weasley, please bring us your rat.”

Ron walked out to him holding the cage, which he put on the floor in front of the headmaster.

“In a moment I will release the unbreakable charm placed on this cage, but in the few minutes we have been down here, I have had Harry close the entrance to the chamber. Nobody can escape. Professor McGonagall, Professor Flitwick, Professor Snape and Remus Lupin, you have been invited to this meeting to provide a firm and certain identification, but perhaps Mr. Malfoy, you can come and tell us if the rat has a toe missing?”

Hermione looked across at Remus with concern. He wasn't looking very well, but then she remembered that it was only two days to the full moon.

Lucius got up and looked at the rat closely. “I don't know what you're playing at, but yes, it does have a toe missing.”

“Thank you, Lucius. Now this rat has been in the Weasley family for almost twelve years, first as the pet of Percy Weasley, then of his younger brother Ronald Weasley. Is that correct, Percy? Forgive me calling you Percy, but with so many Weasleys here today, Mr. Weasley is a little confusing.”

There was a smattering of laughter, while Lucius Malfoy merely looked annoyed.

“Yes. I found him in the garden over eleven years ago.”

“A curiously long life for a rat, as Mr. Lupin pointed out to me.” He pointed his wand at the cage and said, “I have now removed the unbreakable charm and made the cage completely brittle. When he changes, it will break.” He pointed his wand again and the rat began to grow and change until a short balding man was revealed.

There were gasps of surprise all round, though Luna noted that Lucius Malfoy did not seem very surprised.

"That's Peter Pettigrew!" said Professor Flitwick, astounded.

"Is that correct, Minerva?"

"Yes, but how?"

"We will come to that. Mr. Lupin, you were a close friend of Mr. Pettigrew. Can you confirm it is him?"

Remus looked like he wanted to leap at Peter. "Yes, this is the bastard I once called a friend. I will see you suffer, Wormtail!"

Peter got up and tried to run, but Remus knocked him to the floor and held his wand against Peter's head. Peter cried out, "Lucius, Severus, help me!" The two men did nothing and showed no reaction whatsoever, their faces remaining passive, but Harry quickly plucked Remus' wand from his hand before the headmaster petrified both Remus and Peter. Releasing Remus, the headmaster said, "There will be time for justice."

"Harry," Remus cried, "you should have let me kill him. You know what he did."

"Yes, I know what he did."

"Madam Bones. I believe that in the reports made about the supposed murder of Peter Pettigrew by Sirius Black it said that all that was found of Pettigrew was a finger. Is that correct?"

"It was before my time, but I believe so."

"Well, we seem to have found the rest of him. Yesterday, in my capacity as head of the Wizengamot, I was able to pay a visit to Mr. Black. He informs me that the Potters changed the secret keeper from Sirius Black to Peter Pettigrew. Mr. Black blamed himself for their deaths and it was his idea to make the change believing that he

was too obvious a choice. After the Potter's murder, he went looking for Pettigrew, but Pettigrew killed all those Muggles and cut off his own finger before transforming into a rat to escape, presumably through the sewers. I understand that Mr. Black was never actually tried, so I trust that his release can be immediate?"

"I will see to it as soon as I have this thing in Ministry cells," Amelia said firmly.

"Now that is resolved, we will hear from Miss Susan Bones. Miss Bones, please tell us, in full, how you came to solve the mystery which had defeated all of us and then go on to kill the basilisk and the person behind it."

"Yes, Professor," she replied, but he interrupted her before she could begin.

"Oh, Miss Bones, while we do not need to know about the paperwork you were given to help you, apart from that, please be frank and complete. I can assure you that you will not help your young friend by trying to protect her."

Susan looked worried, but not as worried as the Weasleys.

At the end of her explanation, Mr. Malfoy stood up. "This Weasley girl is responsible for attacks on Muggle-born students and the death of another student. Rather ironic that her father is trying to pass a law to protect Muggles is it not? If he cannot protect them against his own daughter..."

"You gave her that diary in Flourish & Blotts," Fred cried.

"Alas, we cannot prove that," admitted Professor Dumbledore.

"And now we only have her word that something in the diary was controlling her," Lucius pointed out. "Very convenient for a murderer."

"Almost as convenient as the imperious curse, eh, Malfoy?" said Professor Flitwick in an unusual display of anger.

"It's funny you should say that, Filius, because I have had the opportunity to examine the diary. While it is impossible to prove that it once held Tom Riddle, it does show the remains of a strong compulsion charm, almost as strong as an Imperious curse. Certainly strong enough to compel a young girl to write in this diary. Young Miss Weasley never stood the slightest chance of resisting it. I am sure that the Ministry can trace spells so far back if they happen to have the wand which cast them?"

"We can, Headmaster," Miss Bones confirmed. "Mr. Malfoy. There is strong enough evidence to allow me to request to examine your wand, if you please."

Lucius got up and began to run, but ran straight into Arthur Weasley's fist. While Arthur shook his hurt hand, Remus grabbed Malfoy's wand and took it to Madam Bones. The twins yelled out together, "Way to go, dad!"

Amelia waved her own wand over Malfoy's wand and over the remains of the diary. Everyone was silent as she watched intently for a full minute.

She raised her head, her face revealing nothing. Then she said clearly and calmly, "Lucius Malfoy, you are under arrest for the illegal use of a dark object and for the murder of Penelope Clearwater."

The Skeeter and Lovegood quills were both writing furiously while the governors murmured.

Lucius got up. "Dobby!" he screamed. Dobby the elf appeared. "Master?"

"Dobby?" said Harry. "You work for the Malfoys?"

Dobby didn't have a chance to answer as he was kicked to the floor by Lucius Malfoy, who had pulled out a second, illegal, wand and was holding it towards the others.

Remus pulled out his wand and looked ready to take him on, but Professor Dumbledore said quietly, "Remus, we don't want another battle with the children here."

Lucius gave an evil smile, then said, "Dobby, take me away from here."

While Dobby was still getting up from the floor, Harry walked across to Malfoy and said, "Take this with you. It's yours." He threw the diary at Malfoy, who was surprisingly agile and caught it. It was still covered with venom from the basilisk tooth, so he threw it down in disgust.

Dobby caught it.

"Leave that and get me out of here," Malfoy snarled.

"Open it! Dobby. Open it!" urged Harry.

Dobby's curiosity overcame his instinct and training to obey his master and he opened the diary.

"A sock!" he cried with delight as he held up the aforementioned object. "Master has given Dobby clothes! Dobby is free!"

Lucius raised his wand to Harry, shouting in rage, "Avada..." but Dobby, with a wave of his hand, made the wand sail from Lucius' hand. It was caught by Remus, who looked delighted as he broke it in two.

"You will not harm Harry Potter," Dobby stated.

Before he could react further, Lucius found himself stunned by Amelia Bones. "That's attempted murder and attempted use of an unforgivable curse to add to the charges. Now, unless there are any other prisoners you have for me today, I think I should take these now."

Dumbledore nodded. "I quite agree. Harry, if you can go ahead of us and open the entrance, please. I think we are done here for today."

“Not quite, Albus,” the Chairman of the Board of Governors said. “There is the small matter of what to do with the body of the basilisk. I imagine that your Professor Snape can advise us that it will be extremely valuable for potions ingredients.”

“Extremely valuable is probably an understatement. The fangs and the poison alone will be worth well in excess of one million galleons. As for the rest, the scales perhaps two to two and a half million... It's a pity the eyes were destroyed as they are extremely valuable just by themselves...”

“It isn't really a pity,” Luna pointed out, interrupting him. “Otherwise we'd all be dead.”

Professor Snape nodded, acknowledging the truth of her statement. “In total, I'd estimate between four and five million galleons of known value, plus whatever can be made from the brain, blood, guts and bones, which have no known magical use. I wouldn't mind a pound or two of its liver for my own experiments.”

“And that belongs to the school, legally I mean?” asked the chairman. “After all it was on school property.”

“I think you'll find that technically it belongs to those who killed it,” said Professor Flitwick. “And if it didn't, given the possibility of claims against the school if it did belong to the school, I don't think it would be wise to attempt to make such a claim. Apart from looking extremely mercenary considering that a girl has lost her life.”

There was a general murmur of agreement.

Professor Flitwick went on. “Can I suggest fifty percent be given to Miss Clearwater's family and the rest divided between those who took part in its destruction?”

Professor Dumbledore pointed out, “There was also the other girl killed by the monster, when Tom released it the first time, and others who have suffered because of it; Hagrid was wrongly expelled fifty years ago and wrongly imprisoned in Azkaban this time, and Miss

Weasley, who was controlled by the diary most of this year and, I have no doubt, will take some considerable time to recover from the experience.”

Professor Flitwick suggested, "Then if those who killed it are in agreement, perhaps one quarter to the family of Miss Clearwater, one quarter to Myrtle's family if they can still be traced, one quarter to be divided equally between the seven who helped kill the beast, and the remaining quarter to be divided equally between Hagrid and Miss Weasley, with some taken out to compensate those who were petrified. Does everyone agree?"

Six of the seven murmured their agreement, but Ginny cried out, "I don't want any of it. I don't deserve a single knut!"

"But Ginny," cried Fred. "You'd get about half a million galleons."

“Think what you could do with all that,” added George. “You'd never have to work or anything.”

"I don't care," she said, miserably.

"If Miss Weasley doesn't want it, by the time the basilisk is broken up and sold there will be plenty of time for her to decide what to do with her share," Professor McGonagall pointed out.

“Fine,” said the chairman with a distinct note of irritation in his voice. “Then I declare this meeting closed.”

\* - Author's notes...

Thanks to alix33 and JJ Rust for spotting a number of small typos in chapters 56 and 57, now corrected.

Thanks to AmyandSharonwtandevrocks for spotting a typo in chapter 16, now corrected.

And well done to red-jacobson for spotting a major boob. Neville already has his own wand after breaking his old one on the way to



the Stone in chapter 37. I've removed that small exchange from chapter 57.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, omega13a, The\_Scribbler and Taylor.

Please review.

Brian

Help with “Britishisms”? “thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural” or see link in my profile.

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## Chapter Fifty-nine

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

Disclaimer – I still don't own Harry Potter. Bet you never knew that!

**\*REMEMBER\*** Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

Help with “Britishisms”? [thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural](http://thesiteofbrian.com) or see link in my profile.

In the previous chapter...

## Meetings in the aftermath, part two

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One of the unusual things about that summer term was that Professor Dumbledore allowed Miss Collier to bring Jean Granger to visit Hermione and Harry every weekend. Mrs. Granger had been very depressed facing what to her was the very recent loss of her husband, but her own condition as well. Being with her children helped her a lot and Professor Dumbledore felt that the magical world owed it to her to do everything they could to help her recovery.

Most weekends Harry or Hermione would be pushing her around outside, if it was warm enough.

From the moment they had heard that her brain needed to learn how to speak again, they had been determined to help. Hermione asked Miss Collier to get her a book on speech therapy only to be handed one straight away. Miss Collier had looked very pleased with herself for guessing Hermione's reaction though she rather pitied Mrs. Granger for having to put up with Hermione's speech training regime!

"Will you ever walk again?" Hermione asked her mother one day.

"Learn," her mother answered.

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While Jean Granger was with her children, Miss Collier spent her time with her old students, including the Weasleys.

"Why are you still mad at Ginny?" She asked Percy one day in the middle of May.

"I'm not." Percy sounded defensive.

"You shouldn't be. Professor Dumbledore says that anyone would have been taken over by the spells on and in that diary."

"I know that."

"Then why won't you even look at her?"

"I do."

"No, you don't. I bet you haven't even spoken to her all week."

"I... I can't."

"She thinks you blame her."

"But I don't. I did. But not now."

Miss Collier waited silently.

Finally Percy admitted. "I can't look at her. If I do, I just keep thinking of her and the basilisk, and it killing Penny."

"You know in your head it wasn't her fault, but you still feel like it was. You're not the only one, you know. She still blames herself."

"If anything it's my fault," said Percy. "I should have seen she was unhappy, should have know something was wrong."

"I've spoken to your parents and if you agree, we'd like you and Ginny to see one of the parents of a Muggle-born. She's a counsellor."

"What's that?"

"Well, among other things, she helps people work through problems, when things have happened that they can't cope with. You can see her separately to start with, but she'll probably want to see you together at some point." At his worried look, she added, "It doesn't mean you're mad," reassuringly, "but you've both had to deal with things nobody your age should have to cope with, come to that, things nobody of any age should have to cope with. I'm going to suggest the same for those who were petrified as well; it won't just be you two."

Percy nodded. "I can't even sleep properly. I keep thinking about it."

"Hopefully this will help."

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Percy wasn't the only one struggling with what had happened.

"I should have been able to do something," Harry said in frustration for the umpteenth time. Previously it had been to Hermione, but this time it was in front of Luna.

"Why?"

"It should have been me that got rid of Voldemort."

"Why?"

"Because... I can't say."

"In a way, you did." At his puzzled look she continued, "Get rid of him, I mean. You made us into a group, working together. Maybe you don't have to do everything yourself."

"But I could hear it. I'm a parselmouth. I should have been able to stop it before..."

"Before it killed Penelope," Luna finished for him. "Did it tell you all its plans? Maybe it sneaked up to your dorm at night to tell you?"

"You're being silly."

"That's two of us," she answered. "Nargles must be catching. Daddy always says they aren't, but I think they must be."

Harry laughed.

Luna smiled. "That's better. I haven't seen you laugh for ages."

"When did you get to be so clever?"

"I am in Ravenclaw," she answered seriously.

"How are the Claws now, by the way? With you, I mean."

"Some are okay," she replied. "But most of them avoid me. I think they're scared of me," she added, sadly.

"Well, you did kill Voldemort," Harry answered her, smiling. "They're probably hoping you don't want revenge for how they treated you."

It was Luna's turn to laugh, though her laughter seemed a little hollow.

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Towards the end of term, Hermione noticed that Harry was getting morose and irritable. Not sure how to help him, she decided to ask her mother, once she managed get her alone.

"Why you think?" her mother asked, slowly forcing the words out of her mouth rather than using her keyboard and neatly reflecting the question back at Hermione.

"I think it's the thought of going back to the Dursleys," Hermione admitted.

Her mother raised an eyebrow.

"I took him there because it seemed like it was the only place we could be safe. And Harry felt so guilty about you and Dad... He still thinks we'd have been better without him..."

"No," her mother said, forcefully.

"I know. I keep telling him. But he's right about one thing. Whoever we live with is in danger from Voldemort, except the Dursleys, and the way they treated him, still treat him, if they were in danger I wouldn't care."

"Ut?" Her mother still had trouble pronouncing the letter B.

"You haven't seen them, Mum, or Harry when he's with them. I made us go out as much as possible last summer, but when we're alone with them, it's obvious they hate him. No, they aren't doing anything, they just look, and the way they ignore him as much as possible. They make me feel like something that crawled out of the sewer and it's just horrible what it does to Harry."

She gave a heavy, exasperated sigh. "He only wanted them to love him, to accept him for who he is. Is that so much to ask?"

Her mother shook her head.

"I don't know what to do. We can't live anywhere else because it puts Harry and everyone in danger. But every minute he spends there, it's like he loses part of himself. It destroys him. I can't imagine how he even survived before we met him."

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It had been an odd few months for the Daily Prophet as well. Fearful of being scooped by the Quibbler, the Prophet had actually reported what had happened at the school more or less accurately.

The emphasis was different though. While the Prophet highlighted the treacherous rat, Peter Pettigrew, the Quibbler treated Pettigrew as little more than a footnote to the story of Sirius Black, the innocent man who had spent so many years in Azkaban, calling for an inquiry into how high up the conspiracy to lock him away went. The fact that the Minister at the time had retired soon afterwards and Barty Crouch, the one held primarily responsible, had been shunted off to a less important department well away from the issues of law and order meant that there was little appetite for further investigation. Susan suspected that Fudge was behind the lack of interest in the Ministry and the Prophet.

The Prophet moved on very rapidly to a series of stories on Lockhart. They had even sent a reporter to track down some of "Professor" Lockhart's claims and found them to be false. If he ever recovered his memory he would be put on trial for his frequent misuse of the Obliviation spell. Some of those whose actions he had claimed for himself had already begun making claims against him and his publishers before the Wizengamot, all represented by the firm of lawyers used by the Prophet. Every week seemed to bring another claim against him, all of which made great headlines.

Hermione pointed out that the Prophet failed to say how these claimants could even make a claim if they'd had their memories stolen, while Susan noted that the various cases against Lockhart had proved very convenient for the Ministry, quickly wiping Sirius Black from the headlines.

But if Lockhart was getting more headlines than he had ever managed before, he didn't have top billing to himself. The trial of Lucius Malfoy made headlines for over a week. The evidence of the diary, his friendship with Tom Riddle at school and his actions in front of witnesses in the Chamber of Secrets made those who would

normally have supported him eager to condemn him quickly, before there was too much investigation into his associates. Minister Fudge had been the first to openly condemn his old "friend" and associate and the others quickly followed.

The one part the Prophet missed out on was that Tom Riddle was later known as Voldemort, though that was mentioned in the Quibbler.

Ginny had refused to accept what she called "blood money" from the sale of the basilisk parts, but at Malfoy's trial, she was awarded one hundred thousand galleons from the Malfoy fortune for each month she had been controlled by the diary, totalling over half a million galleons. A similar monthly amount was awarded to those petrified and to Hagrid for his time in Azkaban. The rest of the Malfoy fortune was awarded to the family of Penelope Clearwater for their daughter's murder and Malfoy mansion was sold.

Draco had been withdrawn from school within hours of his father's arrest, but came back shortly after the trial was concluded. He scowled even more than usual and considering he'd just lost his father to Azkaban, his wealth and his mansion, Harry thought that he looked far too pleased with himself and he had to be planning something. Hermione thought it was just his pride and dismissed Harry's concerns while she concentrated on her studies.

All term, Hermione was going crazy with catching up on her studying and she was even crazier after the exams, certain that she had failed them all.

One lunchtime, she was driving Harry (and everyone else) round the bend about the exams when the Great Hall door opened and a tall man entered. Unlike his photographs in the newspapers, he was clean-shaven, his hair brushed and he was smartly dressed.

He strode to the Hufflepuff table and said, "Harry. I recognised you at once. You look so much like your father, except for your eyes. You have..."

"My mother's eyes. I know."



The man smiled. "You've heard that before. Sirius Black, at your service. They just let me out of St. Mungo's. I had to come straight away and see my godson."

His smile broadened into a grin, "...especially as I hear you're such a fast worker."

Harry looked puzzled. "It took your father till his seventh year to finally go out with your mother. And you're already married at what? Twelve years old?"

"Actually we were married when we were eight," Hermione pointed out. "We just didn't know about it till last year."

Sirius put out a hand. "Mrs. Potter, I presume? The Potter men always did know how to pick 'em. Brains and beauty."

Hermione actually blushed as she took his hand and Sirius lifted her hand and bent down to lightly kiss it.

As he stood back up straight, the grin was lost. "Harry, I failed you. I just wanted revenge on that rat. I should have taken care of you first. Of course I never dreamed that Dumbledore would put you with that bunch of unholy monsters. I would have insisted that you come and live with me, as your godfather. I will have words with your headmaster shortly." His smile returned as he said, "But first, I want to meet this Luna I've heard so much about. I understand it's her I have to thank for my freedom."

Harry eagerly led Sirius to the Ravenclaw table. "Mr. Black, this is Luna Lovegood."

"Sirius, please. Mr. Black makes me feel old."

"Hello. Are you really Stubby Boardman?" Luna said. At the look of total puzzlement on Sirius' face, she added, "Only Doris Purkiss says you are."

Sirius looked at Harry, who shrugged his shoulders, helplessly.

"No, but I want to thank you. Without you, I'd still be in Azkaban." His voice seemed to shiver as he said the word.

"Oh, it was Fred and George Weasley who showed me the map," Luna said.

"I want to meet them too."

Harry took him to the Gryffindor table. "This is..."

"The famous Weasley twins," Sirius finished for him. "I hear you would give even us a run for our money"

The twins both looked confused.

"Sirius Black, otherwise known as Padfoot, at your service. I understand you have a certain document of mine."

Fred just looked stunned, while George reached into his bag, but Sirius exclaimed, "No. Don't bring it out here. I'm just glad it has gone to some worthy successors."

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Harry and Hermione were allowed to skip lessons to spend the afternoon with Sirius, but it wasn't until later, when he had gone, that they learned something else.

"I just don't understand," Hermione had said, as the friends all talked together over dinner, "why he didn't explain all this at his trial."

"My Gran said he never had a trial," Neville replied innocently.

"But how could they lock him away without a trial?" Hermione exclaimed, outraged. "I mean Professor Dumbledore was the head of the Wizengamot."

Without saying a word, Harry pushed his plate away from him, got up and walked up to the staff table. "Is it true?" he demanded.

"Go and sit down, Potter," Snape ordered.

"Not until he answers me. Is it true? You never gave my Godfather a trial?"

"You have to understand the times..." Professor Dumbledore tried to explain.

Hermione had caught up with Harry and said, "But you're head of the Wizengamot. It's your job to see things like that don't happen."

"But he said himself your parents' deaths were his fault," Professor Dumbledore replied, seeming unusually unsure of himself. "He was saying that even as they transferred him down to the island."

"How dare you make accusations against the headmaster like that..." Professor Snape snapped angrily at Harry.

"SHUT UP SNAPE!" Harry shouted. All conversation in the hall ceased at once. "DUMBLEDORE LET MY GODFATHER GO TO AZKABAN FOR TWELVE YEARS WITHOUT EVEN A TRIAL."

His words made echoes in the silent Hall, the students too shocked to react, until one of the Slytherins yelled out, "Potter's gone potty."

The laughter on the Slytherin table after that comment that broke the spell and suddenly everyone was talking at once.

Harry continued, "You sent him to Azkaban and me to the flaming Dursleys. What the fuck were you thinking?"

Professor Sprout reached across the table to take Harry's arm. "Harry. You need to calm down."

"No," Harry retorted, his voice steady and controlled. "I don't. I need to get out of here. Now. And I'm never coming back."

With that he turned around and taking Hermione's hand, who kept looking back but didn't oppose him, Harry walked down the centre

aisle of the Great Hall out into the Entrance Hall and turned out of sight, literally pulling Hermione behind him.

As the chatter in the hall resumed with a vengeance, Professor Dumbledore turned to Professor McGonagall and said sadly, "I think I've lost him."

"No, Albus." she replied quietly. "You lost him when you let them take his godfather away."

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\* - Author's notes...

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, omega13a, The\_Scribbler and Taylor.

Please review.

Brian

Help with "Britishisms"? "thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural" or see link in my profile.

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## Chapter Sixty

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

Disclaimer – Sirius Black went to the Goblins and asked them to use all his compensation money to buy the rights to his godson, Harry Potter, and the others, but as she'd already flogged the film rights to Warner Brothers and the publishing rights to various publishers around the world, he was too late, so I STILL don't own HP! Damn! But I'm not alone, not only are there thousands and thousands of other fanfic writers who don't own him either, but I bet Harry never got a knut out of it, going back to the Dursleys at summer, while SHE got rich off of his suffering. I should watch out if I were you, JKR. Sirius is back and he's NOT happy at you leaving Harry in a cupboard! Pranktime coming soon! (Anyone in Scotland, I'd advise you to leave quick! Actually it's so bloody c...c...cold up there, I'd advise that even without an angry Sirius heading there.)

**\*REMEMBER\*** Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

Help with “Britishisms”? [thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural](http://thesiteofbrian.com) or see link in my profile.

In the previous chapter...

Summer term. Justice and a shocking discovery.

[illegible]

Harry was brought to a sudden halt by Hermione almost screaming at him, "Harry James Potter!"

Like husbands the world over, he knew he was in trouble when his wife used his full name like that. He quickly let go of her hand.

"How dare you drag me out like I was a child, or a piece of property!" She leaned into the word, her tone of voice not disguising at all her emotional state. In fact, Harry didn't think he'd ever seen her so angry, at least not with him.

"And what am I supposed to do if you're leaving?" she added.

"Come with me. You always said there are other schools."

"Disrupt our education because you're annoyed with Professor Dumbledore?"

"Didn't you hear Sirius? If he hadn't been sent away, I'd have lived with him, not the Dursleys."

"But we have friends here," Hermione said pleadingly. "Good friends. We can't just up and leave them." Seeing no response from Harry, she added in an angrier tone of voice, "You're supposed to be a Hufflepuff. Where's your loyalty?"

"You're supposed to be my wife," he retorted, raising his voice. "Where's yours?"

"I'm not expecting you to just drop everything you've worked for just because of a whim," she argued back, her voice also raised.

"Then stay."

"Harry," she answered in a quieter tone of voice, "if you hadn't gone to the Dursleys, we might never have met."

"Good. I'm not loyal enough for you anyway." With that retort, seeing others coming out of the hall and wanting to avoid them, he turned and stomped away.

By the time Neville came out of the Great Hall, Hermione was leaning against the wall, dissolved in tears.

"Are you all right?" he asked, immediately wanting to kick himself for asking such a stupid question.

Rather than answering, Hermione turned away and ran all the way to her dorm.

Harry was still packing when Ernie came into their dorm. "Professor Sprout wants to see you."

"I don't want to speak to any of them. I'm going and there's nothing they can do about it."

"Just because you're mad at Dumbledore, that's no reason to treat Sprout that way," Ernie answered him, angrily. "She doesn't deserve that from you." Ernie turned and began to walk away.

"Ernie!" Harry called.

"Yeah?"

"You're right. Where is she?"

"Greenhouse 2."

"Okay."

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Harry walked into a quiet greenhouse. The greenhouse was big, but after walking just a bit he found his teacher, trying to appear cheery to her plants but with a somewhat mechanical feeling to her movements. He approached her, making sure not to be so quiet as for her not to notice him.

"Thank you for coming, Harry," Professor Sprout's voice sounded sad, as she looked up from the pots she was watering with her wand. "Have you finished packing yet?"

Before Harry could answer, she added, speaking rather quickly, "I'm going to miss you. You may never be the greatest Herbologist, but you've been an important and welcome part of our house."

"Aren't you going to try to persuade me to stay?" Harry asked, surprised, as he distractedly reached into a batch of seedlings and pulled a weed. "I thought Dumbledore would have asked you to."

"That's still Professor Dumbledore," she replied, coolly, "and, no I am not going to try to persuade you to stay, I prefer to leave doing the impossible to you and your friends. Have you thought about where you will go?"

"For tonight the Leaky Cauldron. Then I can get some money out tomorrow and sort out a new school."

"The only thing the headmaster asked me to do was to contact your godfather. He doesn't think it's safe for you to be wandering around on your own and I agree. So does Mr. Black. He wants you to stay here tonight..."

Harry looked like he was about to object.

"Hear me out, please, Mr. Potter. Mr. Black wants you stay tonight and he will come himself to collect you tomorrow, shortly before dinnertime. May I tell him you agree to wait for him?"

"Yes," Harry replied, obviously irritated.

"Very well. Look at it this way. At least you'll have time to make up with your wife."

Harry just scowled.

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To Hermione it seemed that Harry did nothing but scowl most of the following day. She tried to speak to him, but each time he just turned and walked away.



Mid afternoon she found herself in the Hospital wing. After panicking for a moment, she realised where she was and that Luna was sitting on a chair beside the bed. "What happened?" Hermione asked.

"I'm afraid you fainted in class," Luna replied. "Madam Pomfrey thinks it probably the strain the bond is under."

"I feel awful," Hermione admitted.

"You need to speak to Harry," said Luna.

"I know that. I've been trying to all day. He won't stay in one place long enough for me to say anything."

"It isn't good for a bond to break," Luna warned.

"I know and I don't care what happens," Hermione replied, miserably. "He's shut me out. I can't even sense him any more. I miss him, you know? I love him and he doesn't want me any more."

"I don't think that's true," Luna replied.

"I don't know what to do."

"Go with him," Luna answered, as if it was obvious.

Hermione looked up. "You thinks he's right?"

"It really doesn't matter, you know. Whether he's right or not. He needs you. And you need him."

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"Let's walk," Sirius said, bluntly and turned and walked out of the common room.

Harry followed. Sirius appeared to ignore him as Harry almost had to run to keep up with Sirius' long strides until they were outside of the castle.

"I hear that was quite a scene last night. Your father always had a temper."

Harry said nothing.

"But your father never did anything quite so rash. He was as mad as I was, but he usually thought first. I can't believe this; I'm trying to talk sense into a Potter. Me! That's supposed to be Remus' job."

"I'm surprised he didn't come," said Harry.

"He thought you'd be more likely to listen to me."

"You think I'm doing the wrong thing." It wasn't a question.

"As Remus is prone to say, that depends on why you're doing it."

"Dumbledore. He knew you were innocent."

"No. You're wrong. He never knew we changed secret keepers. You don't know me, Harry, or you'd know that I was always the rash one. If I thought Dumbledore deliberately left me in Azkaban knowing I was innocent, I wouldn't have been in the Great Hall shouting at him, I'd have killed him, or tried to."

Harry studied Sirius' face for a moment and realised that for all of his genial manner and all the joking that he'd heard about, he realised that Sirius was a man you didn't want against you.

"But he knew you didn't get a trial..."

"Yes, he did. And so did many others. You have to understand, Harry. Everyone was scared. People disappearing... being killed... some would be put under the Imperious and go home and kill their own families. A wife couldn't trust her husband and a husband couldn't trust his wife."

"Not much has changed then," Harry replied bitterly.

"That's not worthy of you, Harry. From what I've heard, that girl would die before she deliberately hurt you. You haven't even visited her in the Hospital Wing."

"Hospital?" Harry gasped.

"She fainted. Madam Pomfrey thinks you cutting her off put the bond under too much strain..." but Harry had gone, already running to the Hospital Wing.

Sirius couldn't resist a smile as he deliberately walked very slowly back to the castle, knowing that Harry and Hermione needed a little time together before he could continue his conversation with his godson.

Less than a minute later, he burst into the room where Hermione was lying. "Hermione?"

"Harry?"

"I... I'm... I never meant to..." He burst into tears and Hermione pulled him into her arms.

"I'm sorry too, Harry. Of course I'll go with you."

By the time Sirius got to the Hospital Wing and managed to get past Madam Pomfrey, Harry and Hermione were kissing intensely. He couldn't resist teasing. He said loudly, "James always said the best part of a fight with Lily was the making up afterwards."

Harry and Hermione sprang away from each other as though they'd been burned, then they both looked at him, embarrassed.

Although their kisses had seemed quite innocent, looking at Hermione's flushed face, Sirius realised that if Harry was anything like his father, they'd be entangled like eels before very long. He'd have to get Harry alone for the talk, and soon. He thought about roping Remus in for that job, but remembered when he'd been asked to be godfather. He'd been surprised that it had actually been Lily's idea that he be godfather, or dogfather as James had insisted on

calling him. He and Lily had never seen eye to eye, so he'd been stunned when she been the one to ask him to be godfather.

"Why me?" he'd asked her.

"I know we can trust you to look after him, no matter what happens," Lily had replied.

In a moment of grief and madness he had betrayed her trust, sending him to Azkaban and Harry to his own version of hell, if all that he'd heard was true.

No, he decided, he wouldn't pass this off to anyone else. He swore to himself that he'd never let Harry down again.

His godson and his young wife were looking at him strangely and Sirius forced himself back to the present. "I take it that Hermione's coming with you, then?" he asked, with a grin.

Hermione nodded.

"I thought you didn't want me to go," said Harry.

"I didn't say that. I was trying to make you understand how it was. Everyone was so relieved that Voldemort was gone... There were parties everywhere. And a lot of anger at whoever betrayed you. I blamed myself because it was my idea to change secret keeper. Before I realised what was happening, I was in Azkaban."

"They should still have given you a trial," Hermione insisted.

"I'm not going to argue with that," Sirius replied. "I think everyone just wanted to forget. From what Remus tells me, when there were trials, they were quick and not exactly fair. Of course, Death-eaters never played 'fair' either, so nobody cared much. They just wanted the war to be over."

"It was Dumbledore's job to see it was done properly," Hermione said, firmly.

"Yes, it was. Unfortunately great men sometimes make great mistakes. Is that a reason to leave?"

"Yes," Harry almost shouted. "How can I trust him now?"

"I think you can..."

"He left Harry at the Dursleys and didn't even check on him," added Hermione.

"As it happens, I've been talking with Remus, and we both agree. It would be best if you and Harry leave the country. With the prophecy, you'll always be a target if Voldemort does manage to come back."

"You know about the Prophecy? Professor Dumbledore said we shouldn't tell anyone," said Hermione, startled.

"Do you really think that James wouldn't have told his best friend?"

Harry's eyes darkened. "Then Remus knew? All this time, he knew and never told us?"

"No, Harry. We never told him. We knew there was a spy close to the Potters. James and I thought it was Remus. Lily told us we were wrong, but... well, you know what happened. There hasn't been a day since then, I haven't wished we'd have listened to your mother." Sirius seemed deep in thought for almost a full minute. "Remus didn't know until I told him today. That's when we decided. If you'll allow me, I'll go with you to America. When you're not in school, you'll live with me." Sirius gulped. "Your parents wanted me to take care of you if anything happened to them. Instead I lost me temper and went running after Wormtail, and you know how that turned out."

"You want us to live with you?" Harry asked, sure he must have misunderstood.

If only you knew how much, Sirius thought to himself, but said, "I know you'd prefer to be with Hermione's mother, but I'm afraid it's likely to be a long time before she can care for you. I'll come with you, if you'll have me. Do what I should have done years ago."

"Are you serious?"

Sirius grinned for a moment, but after looking at Harry's earnest face, decided not to make the obvious joke. "Yes," he answered simply.

"When can we go?" Harry asked eagerly.

"Tomorrow morning. Madam Pomfrey wants to keep Hermione here for a short while and thinks you should stay with her tonight."

Hermione sighed. "Harry, you should explain it to our friends."

"Tell them about the prophecy? But Dumbledore said it could be dangerous."

"I think the twins have already guessed, or close enough," she replied.

Sirius grinned. "The New Marauders. Worthy successors."

"Do you think I should tell them? Ron, Ginny, Luna, Neville, Susan I mean?"

"I don't know them," Sirius admitted. "Dumbledore likes secrets and he might be right."

Hermione answered him, "I'm just not sure that secrets between friends are good. They helped us before and they would want to know about the prophecy."

"I always hate it when I'm not told something, for my own good," said Harry. "I'll tell them. They deserve to know why we're leaving them."

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Author's notes...

A slightly short chapter, but it seemed the right place to stop.

Thank you to Nick Johnes for spotting a typo in chapter 58 and xavvi and JJ Rust for spotting typos in chapter 59, now all fixed.

Thank you to gravacor for spotting a more important error, pointing out that Harry didn't introduce Sirius to Hermione in the previous chapter. Obviously I had to correct that mistake. I've now added a short conversation between them.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, omega13a, The\_Scribbler and Taylor.

Please review.

Brian

Need help understanding “Britishisms” or avoiding Americanisms? “thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural” or see link in my profile.

[illegible]

## Chapter Sixty-One

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

Disclaimer – Sirius Black hasn't dealt with Little Miss Greedy in Scotland yet, so I still don't own Harry Potter.

**\*REMEMBER\*** Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

Help with "Britishisms"? ["thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural"](http://thesiteofbrian.DOT.com.SLASH.cultural) or see link in my profile.

Note – to those who hate fics where Harry goes to America when everything is perfect – this will be rather different, and remember that he still has to come back to defeat Voldmort and may be back sooner than he thinks (can't say more without giving away the plot, but with Sirius free year three at Hogwarts was going to be boring!)

I want to quote from "Cal" in one of the Yahoo groups, who was talking about stories where Harry goes to the States. Although I don't agree with everything he says, I couldn't put most of it better myself...

"... I find this whole scenario slightly unappealing, actually. It's because of the whole Magical USA stereotype. As soon as a Potter fic goes 'across the pond' it seems like this la-la land of understanding and perfection inevitably rears it's head, and not only is it not interesting (perfection rarely is) it's an annoying cliché.

A 'magical USA' that's significantly more advanced and generally a more pleasant place than the bigoted backwater canon Wizarding Britain comes across as could, with a bit of thought, be done well, but nobody who goes there seems to bother with that thought.

I'm gonna turn this into a plea to anyone out there who's planning to take the Potter crew Stateside in a fic. Please, especially if you're American, sit back and ask yourself, 'What's fucked up about America, what don't I like about America - what about America sucks?'



Not because I want to bash the US of A - I owe you guys and your country a good turn, you lot came over here and saved the world back in the 1940's - but because, going by Wizarding Britain, what's fucked up about a mundane country will be even more fucked up about the magical part of it. Canon Wizarding Britain smacks of Thatcherism and Oxford old-boys clubs turned up to eleven with a heaping helping of Victorian English snobbery and bigotry thrown in. Those are things that suck about real-life Britain, and I'm qualified to say so as I've lived here my entire life.

The canon Potterverse is very British, and that includes the things that suck about it. The whole pureblood thing parallels to the currently-ongoing crap about immigration here in the UK as easily as it does to Nazis or the KKK; it's old-fashioned race-hate with a skull mask and magic wand.

So, when you come to write your magical USA, start off by asking yourself what you think is really messed-up about the USA. We're all a mixed bunch; every place on this ol' Earth's got it's up sides and it's down sides. It's when a place is portrayed as having no down sides that it gets annoying.

In the previous chapter...

Reactions – Hermione and Sirius.

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The first person Harry found was Susan Bones. "Hi, Susan," he said, suddenly feeling embarrassed about his outburst in the Great Hall the night before. "I, er, we thought I should, we should tell you why we're going..."

He was suddenly struck by the thought, what if they were all angry with him for leaving and abandoning them? Would they even be interested in what he had to say?

"Right," Susan replied. She was hesitating. Perhaps she didn't want to be his friend any more. "Harry, before you go, I just wanted to say... I'm sorry for thinking it might be you behind the attacks. I should have known you better. After all, it was Ginny all the time."

"No," replied Harry, slightly louder than he had intended. "It wasn't. It was Lucius Bloody Malfoy. And I hope he rots in Azkaban."

Susan smiled. "As Hermione's not here right now, should I tell you off for swearing? Though I think she might let you off when it comes to Malfoy."

Harry laughed. If she was teasing him, she wasn't angry with him for going. "I'm not sure how to say this..." he began.

"Would it be easier if I got the others? Then you only have to tell us once. Charms Classroom in fifteen minutes?"

Harry smiled with relief. That would also give him time to try to work out what he wanted to say.

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Harry was trying to suppress the feeling that he was being an idiot standing in front of them like a teacher.

"I'm not sure where to begin," he began.

"Why not try, at the beginning?" suggested Luna.

Fred and George looked at each other, and began, "A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away..."

"It is a period of civil war," Fred continued.

"Rebel spaceships, striking from a hidden base, have won their first victory against the evil Galactic Empire." George added.

This was met with laughter from Ron and Ginny, who knew the twins' obsession with Muggle sci-fi films, but puzzled looks from Neville, Susan and Luna.

"What's that?" Susan asked.

"We'll tell you later," Ginny promised, glaring the twins into silence.

"I didn't know they had hips in space," Luna mused, causing more laughter.

"Go on, Harry," Ginny said.

"Yeah, go on, Harry," added Fred.

"Use the force, Luke," intoned George.

"That's a good idea," said Luna. "Using Luke as a secret name, for when you don't want to be The-Boy-Who-Lived."

Ron by this time was laughing hysterically.

"Shut up, Ron," said George.

"Quiet for the Boy-Whose-Name-Must-Be-Hyphenated-And-Capitalised," Fred added.

"You're the ones making the noise," Ginny pointed out.

"She's right you know," Fred and George said together, then, as Harry finally opened his mouth to speak, added, "The force will be with you, always."

By this time, Harry's nervousness had gone, which, Susan and Ginny realised, was the twins' intention.

"I've, er, been talking with Sirius, my godfather," Harry began, hesitantly. "He and Remus were both friends of my parents and they think it's best that I leave the country. I mean we, Hermione and me..."

"Is this because you're the one who has to kill You-Know-Who?" Luna asked in her usual dreamy tone of voice.

The boys all snorted with amusement, but Ginny looked at the startled expression on Harry's face and knew it was true.

"She's right, isn't she?" Ginny asked him.

"How...?" Harry asked.

Luna replied, "It was easy really. He tried to kill you as a baby, but you stopped him instead. Then he tried to kill you and Hermione the Christmas before last, but you stopped him again. This year Ginny says that Tom Riddle seemed almost as obsessed with you as she is..." That comment was met with grins from the other Weasleys and a red-faced, highly embarrassed glare from Ginny... "...And Dumbledore said that Tom Riddle was really You-Know-Who."

"Well, you're right," Harry admitted, "though it might put you in danger knowing this, it's probably less dangerous than being with me. There was a prophecy, not long before I was born, that the one who can vanquish the dark lord approaches. It said he would be born as the seventh month dies to parents who had fought him three times. Dumbledore says that could have meant me, or Neville..."

Harry was interrupted at this point by a yelp from Neville. "Me?"

Grinning slightly, Harry continued, "but it also said that Voldemort would mark him as his equal." Harry pointed to his scar.

There was almost complete silence for nearly half a minute, although it seemed much longer. It was finally brought to an end by Susan. "That means you have to come back to finish the bastard off." Harry resisted the temptation to ask Susan if he should tell HER off for swearing. "How long will you be gone for?"

"I don't know," Harry admitted. "I haven't thought that far ahead. When I'm ready to defeat him, I suppose."

"Harry," Ginny began, in an unusually hesitant tone of voice for her. "Does this prophecy say that you have to do it alone?"

Harry shook his head.

"Then we need to get some training," Ron said, firmly. "So we're ready for when you come back."

Harry sighed. "I have to do this. I have to face him, I have no choice. If I don't kill him, one day he'll manage to kill me. I can't ask you to put yourselves in danger."

"I don't remember you asking," Luna pointed out.

"Sorry to tell you this Harry," said George, "but we're with you, whether you ask or not."

"One for all..." added Fred.

"All for one," George finished, which almost succeeded in bringing a smile to Harry's face.

"So while you're swanning off on holiday..." said Susan, proving that she could tease as well as the twins any day...

"I'm not!" Harry protested.

"Where ARE you going anyway?" Ron asked.

"Sirius said something about America."

"Oh NO!" cried Fred. "He'll come back and see the Burrow and say 'How quaint!' and want to take photos all the time."

"And the last thing we need is another Colin Creevey," George added.

"Perhaps he'll come back with pistols and shoot You-Know-Who," suggested Ron.

"Voldemort," said Ginny. "Or Tom Riddle. I'm not afraid to say his name."

"There once was a boy called Riddle,

Who always wanted a piddle..." began George.

Susan coughed loudly. "As I was saying, Harry, while you're swanning off on holiday, we need to find someone to train us properly."

"I really don't want..."

"I know you don't," Susan replied.

"It's strange you're with Hermione," mused Luna.

"Why?" asked Harry.

"Well, you're not very bright, are you?" she commented. "If you think we'll let you face Tom Riddle alone."

"So we'll find someone to train us properly," said Ron.

"And if none of the adults will, the twins can look stuff up and train the rest of us," decided Susan.

Ron laughed at that. "The twins, looking stuff up?"

"Just because they pretend not to study anything doesn't mean they don't," Susan pointed out. "Where do you think they find out how to do all the charms and stuff they do in their pranks?"

"They're in the library a lot," said Luna, "but they always seem to hide in a corner."

"Shut up, you lot," said George.

"Yeah, you'll ruin our reputation," added Fred.

"It's decided, then," said Susan, in a voice that wouldn't allow any dispute. "Harry and Hermione go to America to learn all they can there, while we train here."

"Why don't we go with them?" suggested Ron.

Fred, George and Ginny laughed.

Ginny finally said, "If you can persuade Mum."

"We'll train here," Ron said. "But Harry can bring us back some cowboy hats. White ones, only the baddies have black ones."

"Little bro had a good idea, Harry," said Fred. "Send us some hats and we'll see what charms we can put on them."

Getting into the spirit of things, Harry said, "I'll just address them to Q, shall I?"

The twins laughed. "I fancy being M myself," said Fred. "Give out orders and get everyone else to do the work."

"Nah," George disagreed. "Too much paperwork."

"I'm sure this makes sense to you three," said Susan, "but are we agreed on what we're going to do?"

"Yes," said Luna, and it seemed like she was speaking for all of them.

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"Have we got everything?" asked Hermione for the third time.

"For the fiftieth time, yes," said Harry, becoming irritated.

They finally made their way to Professor Sprout's office, where, to their surprise, considering it was lesson time, their friends were waiting.

"We had to say goodbye," Susan explained.

To Harry's surprise, Luna gave him a hug. "Goodbye, first friend," she said.

"You've got more friends now," Susan reassured her, before she went to hug Harry as Luna hugged Hermione.

Ginny was next, then she went to Hermione and whispered, "Look after him."

Hermione smiled. "I will."

"Don't look at me," said Ron. "I'm not hugging him!"

The twins grabbed Ron and almost crushed both him and Harry in a "twin hug", until Ron finally managed to extract himself.

"Hermione! Help!" cried Harry.

Hermione was laughing too much.

The twins finally let Harry go when they realised that Sirius had arrived and was also laughing at them.

"We have to go," Sirius said, then to the twins, "I've given Remus your message."

"What message?" Hermione asked.

"We could tell you," said Fred.

"But then we'd have to kill you," finished George.

"I beginning to regret introducing you two to television," said Hermione.

[illegible]



Tumbling out of the floo at the Leaky Cauldron, Harry commented, "I'll never get that right."

"Where now?" asked Hermione.

"We walk," replied Sirius. Luckily from the Leaky Cauldron it was only a short walk to Leicester Square tube station and they were quickly on a direct Underground train to Heathrow Airport.

"We don't have our passports with us," Hermione pointed out, as they entered the main departures area.

Sirius simply smiled and pointed.

Hermione dropped her trunk and ran in the direction he was pointing, squealing "Mum!" so loudly that many heads turned.

Harry wasn't far behind her.

"Are you coming too?" Hermione asked, excitedly.

Her mother's grin dropped a little. "Later, maybe. When I'm better." She handed Harry and Hermione their passports.

"Come on kids, let's check in, then you'll have time to spend with your mother."

Unlike for most travellers, the time between checking in and being allowed to board their plane flew by for Harry and Hermione, even though their departure wasn't until late afternoon, Sirius having planned it so that they'd have as much time as possible with their mother. They went to one of the observation areas so that Harry could watch the planes land and take off.

Even with the extra time together, there were a lot of tearful hugs when it was finally time to board as Hermione realised that they didn't really know when they'd see her again.

Both Harry and Hermione wanted to see everything as they took off, so they both fought over who should have the window seat. An

irritated Sirius finally settled the matter by saying that Harry could have it for the take-off and Hermione would have it for the landing. Then, on their second flight, as they had to change planes in New York, it would be the other way round.

Harry and Hermione, having flown before, had a far better idea of what to do than Sirius, who was totally confused by the customs desks at New York's John F Kennedy Airport.

Sirius didn't want to leave the plane until they had their bags, and thought that Hermione was joking when she said they had to collect their bags from a different place. "But why?" he asked.

Immigration and customs seemed to take forever and Sirius bit back a sharp retort when the young man dealing with them flashed an obviously-bored smile and said "Have a great day."

By the time they finally got through immigration and customs, they didn't have long to wait for their connecting flight to Boston's Logan International Airport. But it was still time enough for Hermione to buy some guide books for the Boston area, where they were going.

Arriving in Boston, they bought some drinks, then someone helpfully directed them to the Airport Shuttle, which took them to the Blue Line on the Subway, similar to London's Underground. Sirius was beginning to wonder if Americans were born telling their mothers to "Have a great day" and said so to Hermione and Harry, causing Harry to splutter the coke he was drinking at the time.

Hermione had already worked out their route, so a quick change onto the Orange Line and they arrived at North Station, where they were to get a Commuter Line train to Salem.

"Is Salem Witches Institute the only one in America?" Hermione had asked after Sirius had had to reassure Harry that wizards could go too.

"No," Sirius replied, "but it is the only one with a worldwide reputation, so most foreign students go there."

By the time they arrived at Salem station, it was already just gone noon and Hermione suggested they get something to eat as Sirius' stomach was rumbling enough, as she put it, to wake the dead.

"We've got time. I sent a message to their headmistress that I'd be visiting today and someone is going to meet us at two o'clock. Let's go up the street and see what we can find."

They hadn't walked far from the downtown, two blocks at the most, when they arrived at a small, but very nice-looking hotel. Harry looked up and saw the sign which read "Hawthorn Hotel". "This looks good" he said.

Sirius opened the door and three walked in. Turning to their right, Sirius saw the reception desk. An extremely attractive, young brunette clerk looked up at him with eyes that seemed to drink him in and said, "May I help you?"

"Yes, I think. I'm looking for the pub or whatever might be open for lunch."

"Oh yes...yes of course. Well, if you follow around to the right, and then go down the hallway, you'll find the Tavern. You can get sandwiches or anything else that you might want. We also have really good daily specials...."

Sirius' stomach rumbled and the young woman giggled with laughter. "I'd say you're more than ready." She leaned a bit closer to him and said in a low, sexy, conspiratorial voice, "I'd join you, but I'm on duty..."

It was outrageous flirting and even Harry, as clueless as he usually was about all things female, recognized it. Sirius' well-earned reputation for a large appetite was well known...and beyond that, neither Harry nor Hermione was going to miss such a great chance to tease Sirius about his getting chatted up by a pretty girl. "C'mon you two" Sirius mock-growled, "let's go eat."

"Have a good lunch" the young woman said with a bright smile as Sirius turned to guide Harry and Hermione down the hall. Once they

were out of the young woman's hearing-range, Harry said playfully, "Am I missing something or was she flirting with you?"

Deciding that discretion is the better part of valour, Sirius chose not to answer. It was better, he thought, to let them entertain their speculations rather than having him come right out and confirm them. He knew that if he did the latter, he'd never, ever hear the end of it.

The Tavern turned out to be a spectacularly good choice for lunch. Not only did it have incredibly fresh seafood – a special treat for Sirius – but they also had more than a half-dozen kinds of burgers. Even Hermione's eyes grew wide when she took in the menu: Chicken Cordon Bleu with sauce béarnaise and French fries; Fresh, grilled Atlantic Salmon served with baby Arugula salad, blueberries, goat cheese, walnuts and balsamic vinaigrette....the list went on and on. She was in heaven.

Finally, the three decided to order the mouth-watering Fisherman's platter (split three ways), the Salmon, and the Boston Burger – a full half-pound burger (cooked medium-rare, thank you) with melted Havarti cheese, onion rings, sliced tomato, and a pickle. It was feast of epic proportions – and, as Hermione pointed out – for about a third of what they would have paid for the same meal in London (given the exchange rate, taxes, and tips), if they could have found anything even comparable.

[illegible]

They pushed themselves away from the table... barely... fifty minutes later. Each thought that he or she would burst from the amount of food they had just consumed. They still had an hour or more yet, so Hermione suggested that they go for a bit of a walk. Grabbing a couple of brochures from the stand to the right of the Hotel's main doors, Hermione handed one each to Sirius and Harry. After a couple of minutes' "discussion", they decided to walk over to the Peabody-Essex Museum. The young woman at the front desk smiled as broadly as she could at Sirius and said with a wink that the Museum was quite wonderful... world-class in fact... and that afterwards he could always come back for a late-afternoon drink.

Flustered, Sirius mumbled his thanks and tried to get out before his two charges busted a gut laughing at his discomfort.

Once outside, the three made good time in getting to the Museum... if only because Sirius really didn't want to talk about getting hit on again by a woman who was clearly at least twelve years his junior, if not more. Not that he wasn't very interested... because Wendy – he remembered her name from her badge – was very pretty and seemed genuinely interested, but getting 'involved' with her conflicted with his primary duty and he knew it.

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True to its word, the Peabody-Essex Museum (which, Hermione read, was originally called the Peabody Academy of Science, after its greatest patron, George Peabody), was awesome. There was so much to take in that the three quickly decided that they'd see only the visiting collections and come back another time to see the permanent collections.

Harry loved the way that things were explained at the Museum – with the long and detailed placards next to each exhibit - and thought that this was one place he would come back to again and again. Hermione, for her part, found the bookshop and quickly lost herself amongst its shelves. There were books on so many topics that she had simply never thought about before that she was completely entranced. Sirius...just let himself be happy in their presence and in all of their discoveries. It was like being a kid all over again for him.

All too soon though, it was time to go and Sirius quietly asked both Harry and Hermione to finish up so that they could connect with the person or persons who would be escorting them to the Salem Academy. He didn't know exactly where they would be going, as the school was unplottable just like Hogwarts, but he didn't want to be late and have them make a bad first impression.

The three had to make it to something called the 'Salem Willows' and the boat dock at its end, so Sirius flagged down a taxi, with the help

of one of the local bobbies who was out, directing traffic. Harry and Hermione piled in first, which didn't leave much room for Sirius in the back, so he clambered into the front seat. The fellow driving looked like he had been around a while. "Where to?"

"Salem Willows, please" Sirius said. "We've got to meet a boat coming in."

"Right then. No problem. That will be five even."

There was a meter in the cab, just to the drivers' right, and Sirius saw that it had defaulted back to \$2.10. From his limited experience in the Muggle world in London, he knew that cabbies there charged a lot more. Silently, he wondered what other surprises they were going to run into in the States that he wasn't expecting.

It was a quick ride over to the Salem Willows. On the way, they passed a massive power-plant and the stench from it assailed his animagus-enhanced sense of smell. The driver looked over and must have caught the look on his face. "Stinks, doesn't it?"

Sirius nodded. "How do they allow that so close to the town?"

"Been here for years. Impossible to shut it down...though God knows, they've tried. It's particularly bad in the spring and summer."

Another minute passed before the taxi slowed and driver said, "We're here. Just head down towards the water and you'll see the pier. There's just one slip, so it's not a problem knowing you're in the right place."

Sirius paid the man happily and said, "Thanks, we really appreciate it. Have a great day."

"You too. Hope you find what you're looking for"

Ignoring the smirk from Hermione, Sirius nodded and then followed his charges, who had already turned towards the pier. As the taxi pulled away, Sirius could tell that the man's eyes were on Harry and Hermione, who were holding hands openly.

When he reached them, Hermione said, "Have a great day?"

"Well," Sirius said, defensively, "If we're going to be here a while, I thought I'd get in some practice with American."

"Thinking of practising on a certain young lady are you?" asked Harry, with a cheeky grin.

But it was already two minutes to two, so Sirius was rescued from having to answer as a boat silently appeared up and out of the water. Both Harry and Hermione could feel the palpable magic around it. A young woman, dressed in khaki pants and a pale yellow polo-shirt that had the Salem Academy logo over the breast, walked up the gang-plank. Undoing the lock magically with a flick of her wrist, she saw the three and said simply, "Welcome. There's three of you? Oh well, plenty of room. Please come with me."

They followed her down the gang-plank and onto the boat, taking care to step only where she told them that they could. The pilot of the boat was silent, but his movements were practised and easy and soon the boat had pushed back from the dock and was moving out into the Harbour. The sudden sound of his voice caught Harry by surprise. "Ready when you are, Ma'am"

"Go ahead then, Roger" she said.

The man, Roger, drew out his wand and tapped the wheel in a specific spot and soon the whole boat was sinking into the water. It was extremely disconcerting and both Harry and Hermione found themselves clinging to the other. The welcome-witch saw their reaction and smiled a soft, knowing smile.

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Sirius, for his part, thought that the boat-ride was interesting, and perhaps a bit unnerving. He liked running along the water's edge or swimming in the shallows – especially in his animagus form, but had little use and little interest in being in 'deep' water. He didn't have to

fight his discomfort for long though, because soon they were rising out of the water again and could see the bright sunshine and the rippling waves... of a totally different body of water.

"Where are we?" Sirius asked, once he had found his voice.

"Great Wenham Lake"

He looked all around the boat and couldn't even see the shore in any direction. "It's huge! Do the Muggles....?"

She laughed. "No. They think it's just a small lake, surrounded by woods and golf-courses. They can't see how big it really is. It's one way we keep the Academy safe and secret."

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It wasn't until the welcome witch said they were quite close that they began to see an island, where previously they had only seen clear water.

The witch brought the boat to the dock, where it seemed to stick itself to the side of the dock, so they she didn't have to tie it up, Muggle style.

"Welcome to the Salem Witches Institute," she said formally.

"Thank you," all three replied as they climbed out of the boat

"Just walk up that path through the trees," she explained. "It's not far."

They left the trees behind them and were on a wide lawn, with an impressive looking building in front of them. It reminded Hermione of a Stately home back in England.

Some way to their left they could see children playing. Hermione noticed that they seemed younger than Hogwarts' first years and none of them wore robes or anything resembling a uniform.



The great oak door opened as they approached and a voice from somewhere intoned "Enter."

They walked in slowly, until another voice called out, "Well, Come in, then."

They turned to the right and walked into what was obviously an office.

"Mr. Black, I take it?" a harassed-looking wizard asked.

"Yes."

"The principal will be back in a minute."

"No she won't. I'm back now," said a cheery voice. "Mr. Black?"

Sirius nodded. "yes, er, Ma'am."

"Please, No. Ma'am makes me feel like my grandmother. I hear congratulations are in order."

Sirius looked puzzled.

"Your freedom of course. Freedom is very important to us here in America. Katherine Joling at your service. Now what can I do for you? You didn't mention you'd be bringing someone with you."

"May I present Harry Potter and his bonded wife Hermione."

The principal's eyes flickered briefly to Harry's scar, then widened with surprise at the mention of bonded wife, but she recovered quickly and put out her hand.

"Mr and Mrs. Potter. Welcome. Why don't you all take a seat?"

Harry fought back the ridiculous thought of saying 'Where to?' and they sat down.

"May I save you some time?" she asked. "If your intention is to enrol the Potters here, I'm afraid you've had a wasted journey."

Sirius looked surprised.

"It has always been our policy not to involve ourselves in wars back in Europe. We came here to get away from problems in Europe. That policy was made official by the Ministry in 1918. We lost too many good American wizards in a war that was nothing to do with us."

"But what about the Second World War?" asked Hermione.

"You must be Muggle-born, I assume?"

Hermione nodded.

"Muggle America decided to get involved in that war after being attacked by Muggle Japan. There was no attack on Wizarding America, so our policy remained unchanged, as it has to this day. We see no reason to change it, and, as of yesterday, a very good reason not to change it."

She handed Sirius a piece of parchment. "That appears to have been sent to every wizarding school in America and Canada, and I suspect elsewhere too. As you can see for yourself, it basically threatens attacks on the staff and students of any school who takes in Harry Potter. Furthermore, it offers a reward to anyone who passes on information as to his whereabouts."

"And it's on British Ministry parchment," Sirius said, frowning. "You say this went everywhere?"

She nodded. "Everywhere. I'm sorry. There won't be a school that will risk taking them. It's one thing for the staff, but we can't put the other students at risk. Even if I would, the parents would never allow it. Putting it bluntly, it's not our war."

"Can you suggest anything we can do?" asked Sirius.

"You want my advice? Drop off the face of the earth. Go where they'd never think to look. You are welcome to stay here for tonight. That will give you a whole day to begin travelling tomorrow."

"Thank you," Sirius said.

"Now, if you turn left out of this office, and head up the main stairs, on the right hand side is the library. Mr. Warner, our librarian, will help you with lists of other wizarding locations worldwide, though you might be better hiding in the Muggle world."

It was with heavy hearts that they made their way up the stairs. Even a new library to explore couldn't cheer Hermione up.

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Author's notes...

For those who aren't familiar with the word "swanning", here is the excerpt from the online Oxford Dictionary... "verb (swanned, swanning) Brit. informal move or go in a casual, irresponsible, or ostentatious way."

I've now remembered to remove "THE STORY SO FAR from chapters 57-60 and reuploaded those chapters.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, omega13a, The\_Scribbler and Taylor. Thanks especially for The\_Scribbler, who wrote most of the part in Salem town.

Please review.

Brian

Need help understanding "Britishisms" or avoiding Americanisms? "thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural" or see link in my profile.

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## Chapter Sixty-Two

By Brian Grove

Brian at [rescueddoggies dot com](http://rescueddoggies.com)

Disclaimer – I still don't own Harry Potter.

**\*REMEMBER\*** Below the author's notes on the most recent chapter, is a short resume, "The story so far".

Help with “Britishisms”? “thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural” or see link in my profile.

In the previous chapter...

## Flight to America and a disappointment.

ARE YOU FROM CHICAGO IL. or WICHITA KS. or LAS VEGAS NV.?

Can you add local detail for the next chapter of this story?

## ARE YOU FROM WASHINGTON D.C.?

Can you add local detail to make THIS chapter better?

Please contact me [brian \(at\) rescueddoggies \(dot\) com](mailto:brian@rescueddoggies.com)

Sorry for the long delay, I've been quite ill from some kind of infection which left me very weak even now – of course being hit with food poisoning from a Take-Away as I was finally recovering didn't help much!

[illegible]

Harry, Hermione and Sirius had spent an unproductive hour discussion, or arguing about where to go. At times, their somewhat

heated discussion had attracted the disapproving glare of the librarian, Mr. Warner.

"Damn the Ministry!" Sirius exclaimed vehemently. "Why can't they leave us alone?"

"Are you sure it IS the Ministry?" Hermione asked quietly.

"Oh, this is just like the Ministry; they're all a bunch of..." He stopped himself. "Anyhow, it's on Ministry paper."

"Couldn't someone else get hold of Ministry paper?" Hermione asked. "This just doesn't make sense."

"Since when does anything the Ministry does make sense?" Sirius retorted bitterly.

"I know you've got reason to hate them," Hermione continued, her voice low, "but is there anyway to find out if this really did come from the Ministry?"

Sirius looked almost as if Hermione had stunned him. "I have to admit, this doesn't seem like Fudge's style. He's an idiot, but not a malicious idiot."

Hermione looked relieved.

"That settles where to go, then," Sirius stated. "If there's a way to check this out, and find out who's behind it, the American Ministry is the best place to start."

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It was quite late that night and Harry and Hermione had gone to bed when Sirius knocked on Madam Joling's door as she had asked him to do.

The door swung open. "Come in. Sit down. Have you decided what you are going to do yet?"

"Not really. I thought about heading north, into Canada, but Hermione pointed out that was too obvious. She suggested doing what Muggles did, go west."

Madam Joling smiled at that. "That was a long time ago."

"Yeah, well, Harry liked the idea. I think he thought he could become a cowboy or something. Of course, I told him there aren't any cowboys now..."

"Oh, but there are. Not so romantic of course, they're more likely to round the cattle up using motorbikes or trucks, but they still exist. So you're going west?"

"Not right away. I want to visit the Ministry here."

"I assume you mean the International Ministry?"

"Sorry?"

Madam Joling tried not to smile at his ignorance. "We have two Ministries. One, which deals with anything to do with Muggle Relations or International matters, is in Washington D.C. Our main domestic Ministry is in Witchita, Kansas."

"I suppose I should try the International one first," said Sirius.

"Hmm. Washington. Be careful. The southern states are, how shall I put it?... different."

"Dangerous for the kids?"

"No, I don't mean that." Madam Joling smiled. "You'll find out. But can I give you a word of advice?"

"Of course."

"Don't take the children with you to the Ministry."

"You think they'll harm them?"

"I don't think so, but you get a lot of strange people there and money talks. But I guess you know that, if your Ministry is after them."

"Can I have a proper look at that letter?"

"Sure," she opened her desk drawer and pulled out the parchment and handed it to him. "What would your Ministry want with Harry Potter? I thought he was a hero to all you Brits? And what he did, it's all years ago anyway. Why would they want him now?"

Sirius sighed. "I'm not sure it IS the Ministry." The more he looked at the paper, the more he felt that Hermione was right. This didn't ring true.

"It's Ministry parchment," Madam Joling pointed out, "if not the Ministry, then who?"

"I don't know. I'm hoping someone in your Ministry can help me find out."

"It's none of my business, but if someone is out to get Harry, wouldn't he be safer back at Hogwarts, under Albus Dumbledore."

Sirius' face darkened. Despite his attempt to calm Harry, Dumbledore, as the most senior judge in Britain, wasn't high on his list of favourite people. Trying to ignore his own feelings, he answered simply, "Harry doesn't trust him."

Madam Joling hadn't missed the sudden change of expression, but, deciding not to pursue the matter further, she asked, "Do you know when you are leaving?"

"Tomorrow morning, fairly early if possible."

"Hmm. We have an out day tomorrow. You could easily leave with them."

"An out day?"

"Every other Saturday the students aged 13 and over can go into Salem or other nearby towns if they wish to do so. The younger ones can go as well if they can find a senior willing to take them."

"They go into a Muggle town?"

"Sadly, the magical section of Salem isn't what it once was. Most of the students go into the Muggle areas. Some, if they have the money and time, catch the train and take it one stop north to downtown Beverly or head south to Lynn."

"It's like that in all American schools?"

"Oh, no. Some have nothing to do with the Muggle world. One doesn't even let the students out at all, they have one day a term when magical traders can set up stalls on the school grounds instead. What do you know of our history?"

"Not much," Sirius admitted. "We've heard of the Salem Witch Trials, of course..."

"Well, after that, the school moved here. Previously it was in the centre of Salem, not far from where the train station is now. Shortly after that, the Principal of the time decided to begin to reintroduce our students to the Muggle world. The idea was to build acceptance to ensure that nothing like it ever happened again."

"Isn't that illegal?"

"Yes," she admitted cheerfully.

"Doesn't your Ministry...?"

She almost laughed. "You're thinking like a Brit. Your Ministry tries to control everything. Our Ministry is a long way away, and that's the way we like it. You'll find we're almost like different countries here. There's us, in the North East, not so many of us now..."

"Why's that?"



"Even wizards like the sunshine, Mr. Black," she said, with a slightly rueful smile.

"Sorry, I interrupted you."

"No problem. There's us, in the North East. Let's just say we take what most of the International Wizarding community say with a large pinch of salt. Then there's the Mid-West. Like their Muggle neighbours, they're our farmers. They're also the most suspicious of outsiders, but that's where we almost had our biggest security breach of the century."

"Why?"

"Ever tried explaining why your crops are green, when everyone else's are dust blowing in the wind? The depression was quite a problem. My family moved east then. Then there's the South, stricter than the rest of us. They are also the nearest we have to your pureblood-is-superior philosophy. And finally, the West Coast, a mixture if there ever was one. So you see, you'd never get us all to agree on anything, so our Ministry is impotent compared to yours."

"So, despite what your Ministry says, you could help us, help Harry?"

"Yes," she admitted, "But I'm not Albus Dumbledore. If I put our children in danger like that, there'd be a new principal about three days after the first letters home. I will ask one of our prefects to escort you to Boston, to see you all safely on the train to Washington."

"Is that for Harry's sake, or to make sure we go?"

"Yes," she replied, enigmatically. "Does anyone else here know where you plan to go?"

"Only your Mr. Warner from the library."

She frowned for a moment, then her face cleared and she stood up. "Good luck, Mr. Black," she said, holding out her hand.

As he shook the woman's hand, she added, "Do tell the young lady not to think too badly of us. After all, even the wizards in Britain didn't get involved in the war against Grindelwald, until Dumbledore took him on. They also felt it was nothing to do with them, and they were a lot closer than we were."

Sirius nodded. "I'll be sure to point that out. Thank you for doing what you could."

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The small boat which had brought them to the Salem W.I., as everyone called the school, the afternoon before, that grown. Previously the size of a small launch capable of carrying perhaps eight or ten passengers, it now looked more like a small cross-channel ferry, easily big enough for the two hundred students planning on spending the day in Salem.

"Don't the Muggles say anything when it comes into port this big?" Hermione asked.

"They don't notice, do they?" Eugene replied as if stating the obvious. Eugene was the prefect who was with them and he gave the impression of being rather snobby and he obviously thought that Harry and Hermione couldn't be good enough for Salem or they would have been accepted there. The three English decided NOT to explain the true reason.

Their goodbyes back at the W.I. had been swift. "Good luck, Harry Potter, Mrs. Potter, Mr. Black. Enjoy your train ride to Washington. Maybe we can meet again in happier times."

"Will it be a high-speed train, like in England?" Harry asked, showing all the excitement of a schoolboy for once.

"No," she had replied. "Muggle America doesn't have high-speed trains, although they are supposed to be building one, but I'm afraid you're a few years too early."

As they'd boarded the boat, Sirius noticed Mr. Warner from the library standing watching them. He was presumably there to supervise the students, but Sirius couldn't help but notice that he seemed more interested in them, or more specifically, in Harry.

If they'd managed to leave the Institute without any fuss, that didn't last long. They had scarcely left the dock before a group of young girls came running up to Harry with notepads in their hands, begging him for autographs.

For a second Hermione didn't know whether to be jealous or amused, but looking at the bewildered expression on Harry's face, and the fact that most of his admirers seemed to be about nine or ten years old, she decided on amused.

Her amusement came to an abrupt end as both she and Harry were thrown to the ground by Sirius. A flash of red light passed closely above their heads as they fell and each could feel the heat of the dark curse. Someone was playing for keeps and both Harry and Hermione knew to keep their heads down.

Hermione heard some of the younger ones screaming and turned to look. One of Harry's "groupies" hadn't been so lucky, and she was bleeding badly from a quickly blackening cut in her arm.

Ignoring the risk to himself, Eugene had pushed the other children away and cast a spell to stop the bleeding. Sirius meanwhile, had cast a shield. Following his lead, Hermione took Harry's hand and together they cast a huge shield, big enough to cover the small group around them. Sirius dropped his own shield in amazement. "They told me, but..." he muttered.

A couple of prefects came running towards them, slightly out of breath. The girl, who appeared to be the elder of the two, said, "Whoever it was, they got away. Apparated."

Eugene had picked up the girl who had been hurt, then turned to Sirius. "The Obliviators will be here any second," he said. "It might be best if you got these two out of here."

Sirius nodded and then he looked at the girl. "Will she be...?"

"She'll be fine. Now go." He turned to Harry and Hermione and added, "That was some shield. I hope I never have to fight you."

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On the train back into Boston, all three were quiet. Hermione watched out the window as they slowly headed south-west. The train, which was six coaches long and pulled by a big, powerful-looking diesel engine, took fifty-two minutes as passed it out of Salem, into Swampscott, through the Lynnfield marshes, and made its way into Boston-proper. She was saddened and a bit put off, though not surprised, by the amount of rubbish that had accumulated along the tracks, as well as under some of the seats in the coach they were sitting in, but she accepted it as one more of the things that just needed to be fixed in the world. Something told her that she'd not be happy living in the area, but she couldn't put her finger on exactly the reason why. It didn't matter though, because of the thrice-damned letter that the Headmistress at the Salem Institute had received.

The three shared some laughs as they changed from the Orange line to the Red line and ended up going in the wrong direction, but eventually, they did make it to South station and onto an Amtrak train bound for Washington D.C.

They talked for some length about everything that had happened. "Do you think that girl will be all right?" Harry asked.

"I'm sure she will. Their prefect seemed to know what he was doing."

"She was right then, wasn't she?" Harry said morosely. "It's dangerous having me there."

Desperate to change the subject, Hermione asked, "Sirius, how did you get Mum to agree to you bringing us here?"

"I didn't," he replied, but before Hermione could question that, he added, "Miss Collier did. Your mother didn't like the idea of someone she didn't know taking you anywhere, especially someone like me."

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked.

"She could see that I was still affected by my time in Azkaban... Even my pointing out that I was Harry's dogfather didn't seem to reassure her..."

For a moment it seemed like Sirius was miles away... that he'd forgotten they were with him, so Hermione didn't bother to correct his mistake about the word godfather, but then Sirius continued as if he hadn't paused at all. "But Miss Collier pointed out that your mother still couldn't look after herself yet and that you'd be safer with a wizard to protect you. She even contacted Dumbledore of all people."

"What did HE say?" Harry asked moodily. "That I have to stay there to be safe?" He said the word safe as though it was poison.

"No, actually. I've no more reason to like Dumbledore than you have, less in fact, but say what you will, he does want to keep you safe. He said that if you were determined to leave Hogwarts, then you'd be safer out of the country with me, than staying in England."

On that surprising note, Sirius got up and said, "Come on, let's see what their train food is like."

"Should have been a Weasley," Hermione whispered to Harry.

It was evening as they approached Washington Union station. "Where do we go now?" Hermione asked.

"We'll have to find a Muggle hotel for the night, then I want to visit the Ministry in the morning."

"But it's Sunday tomorrow," Hermione pointed out.

"Okay, clever clogs, I'll visit the Ministry on Monday morning. Tomorrow we'll be visitors."

"Tourists," Hermione corrected him.

What Sirius' reaction to being corrected might have been, they never found out as Sirius grabbed both their hands and began to run.

As they turned a corner, a green flash of light hit the wall behind them, then another spell with a blue light hit Harry, but didn't seem to have any effect.

Sirius quickly cast a disillusionment spell over the three of them and without taking too much notice of where they were going, they ran down some stairs and found themselves on a platform between two set of underground tracks. Still not satisfied that they'd lost their attacker, as soon as a train came in they got on it, without worrying about where it went.

"Who was that?" Harry asked, breathlessly.

"I saw that Warner bloke, from the library," Sirius replied.

Two stops later, Sirius insisted they change trains and they were quickly speeding south on the Yellow subway line.

Shortly after that, he made them get off.

"The Pentagon," said Hermione. "Can we go and see it?"

"Not now," said Sirius. "I need to find out how we can get you two away from Washington. Come on."

Hermione was standing looking at a map. "It says if we get the Blue line north from here, in two stops we get off at Rosslyn and we can get a bus to the airport from there.

The bus to the airport was quite quick but couldn't be quick enough for Sirius, who was still looking anxiously over his shoulder.

"I don't think they'll be running after the bus," said Hermione, with a grin.

Sirius wasn't in a laughing mood. "Third time lucky," he muttered to himself. Twice before he been responsible for Harry's safety and both times he'd failed. The first, when he'd been asked to be the Potters' secret keeper and he'd suggested the rat instead; the second after James and Lily had been killed, when, instead of taking care of Harry, he'd run off determined to kill the said rat, ending up in Azkaban and Harry ending up with Lily's damned sister.

When they reached the airport and found the nearest departures lounge, Hermione asked, "Where are we going, Sirius?"

"I don't know. What's the first plane?"

Hermione looked at the departures board. "There's one boarding now for Chicago."

"Right, Chicago it is. Where do we go to get that one?"

"Er, we need a ticket first. Over there, I think," she said, pointing to one of the many ticket counters.

Sirius handed her a fistful of hundred dollar notes. "Will that be enough?"

"We only want seats on the plane, not to buy it," Hermione said, but Sirius still looked too worried to even smile at her joke.

By the time they landed at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, Harry was sleepy, so Hermione asked where the nearest hotel was.

A short trip on the free shuttle bus took them to the Hilton hotel. More used than Sirius to such procedures, Hermione helped him check in and soon all three were asleep.

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Author's notes...

Please note – I know that Muggles don't spell Witchita correctly, so don't bother telling me it's wrong!

Thanks to Mariann's for pointing out that Sirius NEVER says "You-Know-Who" chapter 60 has now been corrected and re-uploaded.

Thanks to Akujin666 for pointing out a repeated word and other typos in chapters 51 and 52, now corrected and re-uploaded.

Thanks to JJRust, Raven3182, xavvi, Iris Belle and alix33 for finding a few typos in chapter 61, now corrected and re-uploaded. I've also added an author's note explaining the word "swanning".

This chapter is set in 1993, the "High Speed" Acela Express line between Boston, New York and Washington D.C. was in fact opened some years later though speed restrictions remain on many parts of the line.

I also corrected a minor typo in chapter 15.

Thanks to my betas, Nachoman1, a.k.a. Ignacio Ramírez, omega13a, The\_Scribbler and Taylor.

Please review.

Brian

Need help understanding “Britishisms” or avoiding Americanisms?  
“thesiteofbrian DOT com SLASH cultural” or see link in my profile.

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## THE STORY SO FAR

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Chapters 1-27 mid JULY 1988 - Sunday 1st September 1991



For a summary of the story BEFORE they get to Hogwarts, see the bottom of chapter 27

Chapters 27-46 19th September 1990 - Saturday 20th June 1992

For a summary of their FIRST YEAR at Hogwarts, see the bottom of chapter 46

Chapter 47

Saturday 20th June 1992 – early July 1992 (date unspecified)

Harry and Hermione return to the Dursleys'.

Chapter 48

Early July 1992 (date unspecified) – Saturday 19th September 1992

The rest of Harry and Hermione's summer, the return to Hogwarts and a dramatic visit to the hospital.

Chapter 49

Saturday 19th September 1992 – Sunday 20th September 1992

A return visit to the hospital and Harry makes friends.

Chapter 50

Monday 21st September 1992

Luna in Hufflepuff and in Professor Dumbledore's office.

Chapter 51

Monday 21st September 1992 – late October 1992

Luna – the aftermath.

Chapter 52

Late October 1992 – Early February 1993

The Slytherin Monster begins its reign of terror.

Chapter 53

Early February 1993

With Harry and Hermione petrified, Susan and Luna go to see Hogwarts' "monster" specialist.

Chapter 54

Early February 1993

Malfoy has problems with Professor McGonagall, Snape, the twins and a group of first-years.

Chapter 55

Early February 1993 - Late March 1993

Research, plans and a death at Hogwarts.

Chapter 56

Late March 1993

Into the chamber.

Chapter 57

Late March 1993

Meetings in the aftermath, part one

Chapter 58

Late March 1993 – Monday, 19th April 1993

Meetings in the aftermath, part two

Chapter 59

Late April 1993 – Late June 1993

Summer term. Justice and a shocking discovery.

Chapter 60

Late June 1993

Reactions – Hermione and Sirius.

Chapter 61

Late June 1993

Flight to America and a disappointment

Chapter 62 (this chapter)

Late June 1993

Attack and another flight...

CHP63